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Parrot's path to
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WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12 1997

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Appraisal system 'to get teeth'

Teachers face sack if their pupils fail

BY JOHN O'LEARY AND PHILIP WEBSTER

TEACHERS could be sacked over their pupils' poor results for the first time since the Victorian school boards, under plans put forward by Gillian Shephard yesterday.

The Education Secretary told a news conference that the system of appraising teachers would be given teeth, so that the worst could be removed from the classroom. And as well as becoming accountable for children's results, teachers would be judged on their ability to maintain discipline and 'teach interestingly'.

The initiative was among a series of measures announced by Mrs Shephard and John Major, including A-level reforms, new national achievement targets and the threat of 'hit squads' taking over from poor education authorities.

On teachers' appraisals, Mrs Shephard said that children's results were a key indicator of a teacher's competence, and would form part of a new framework. But head teachers said the plan would distort the system without enabling incompetent staff — the Chief Inspector of Schools has said that there are 13,000 — to be sacked more quickly.

Union leaders were also enraged. Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the Nat-

ional Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, said that the threat could bring a new wave of boycotts to the classroom, with union conferences at Easter likely to hear calls for action.

He said: "To call this latest measure Victorian or Draconian is an insult to Victoria and Dracula [sic]. The stupidity of this is unbelievable and there will be a backlash. Years of development of teacher appraisal are to be swept aside in the interests of a few seconds of sound-bite in the Conservative Party's increasingly desperate attempts to catch the big idea on education."

Other measures announced yesterday as part of the Government's campaign to increase 'parent power' included requiring schools to set targets for each age group, comparing their performance with similar schools and national averages. Parents would be kept informed through simple school reports, and would have access to new league tables of seven and 14-year-olds' test results.

Targets already exist for GCSEs. A levels and their vocational equivalents. The latest proposals would add to the list English, mathematics and science test results for

seven, 11 and 14-year-olds. "For the first time the performance of schools and their pupils will be an open book — no longer a sealed volume," Mrs Shephard said.

Mr Major also disclosed that the 20 lowest-performing education authorities — all but one Labour-controlled — would be inspected and if they failed, "hit squads" would take over.

Calderdale, which covers the Ridings School in Halifax, has already been inspected and a report is expected in the next fortnight. Other authorities at risk include the London boroughs of Islington, Lambeth, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Barking & Dagenham, Newham, Haringey, Greenwich and Lewisham, as well as Kingston-upon-Hull, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sandwell, Middlesbrough, Manchester, Barnsley, Bradford, Salford and Wolverhampton.

Mr Major said: "If you want to lever up standards and move towards excellence for all, you need to expose what has gone wrong, even if in doing so you sometimes have uncomfortable periods when people ask why things are not better. But we have done that and it was the right thing to do. We have all the levers now to raise standards."

But David Blunkett, the Shadow Education and Employment Secretary, said that Labour had proposed "improvement teams" for failing local authorities and had been ridiculed for proposing national literacy targets. "Now two weeks later, we have another U-turn from ministers as they accept yet another Labour proposal to raise standards."

On the constitution and he appeared on television and radio to talk about devolution issues after being given the job in the summer.

Later in the Commons, Mr Major made no attempt to defend Mr Dorrell when Tony Blair had accused him of "disowning" his Health Secretary. MPs drew a swift contrast with the way Mr Major had risen to the support of Michael Portillo when he was attacked by a Labour MP over the handling of the Royal Yacht affair.

Tory sources admitted that Michael Forsyth, the Scottish secretary, had been angry about Mr Dorrell's interview with *The Scotsman* on Monday, when he suggested that a future Tory government might abolish a Scottish Parliament if Labour set one up. It contradicted Mr Forsyth's line — endorsed by the Prime Minister yesterday — that such a parliament would be

Continued on page 2, col 5

Simon Jenkins, page 18

Dorrell demoted after Scottish gaffe

BY OUR POLITICAL EDITOR

STEPHEN DORRELL was publicly slapped down by John Major yesterday and downgraded as the Conservatives' special campaigner on the constitution.

The demotion — which came after the Health Secretary's gaffe over how the Conservatives would treat Labour's proposed Scottish Parliament — provoked scarcely concealed glee among rightwingers who are increasingly suspicious of Mr Dorrell's advances in anticipation of a possible Tory leadership election.

The rebuff came at a pre-election press conference called to launch the Government's latest education reforms. Asked why Mr Dorrell should have a constitutional role which had nothing to do with his department, Mr Major curtly replied: "Responsibility for the constitution rests with the Prime Minister and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales."

Mr Dorrell has, however, made several recent speeches

on the constitution and he appeared on television and radio to talk about devolution issues after being given the job in the summer.

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Continued on page 2, col 5

Simon Jenkins, page 18

Italy gives tenor red card for off-key cabaret role

BY ROBIN YOUNG

THE man who was to have sung the Italian national anthem at tonight's Cup match at Wembley has been dropped after the country's Ambassador objected to newspaper photographs of him singing *Nessun Dorma* nude on a table top.

Alessandro Bernardi, a Venetian-born cabaret artist and former dishwasher, is to be substituted after Dr Paolo Galli complained that he might not be an entirely fitting representative for the nation at such an important fixture.

The Football Association confirmed last night that it had received a letter

from the Ambassador. Signor Bernardi, who now lives in Camberwell, south London, had been booked to perform the rousing *Fratelli d'Italia* before Michael Ball sings *God Save the Queen* in front of a packed stadium and a global TV audience of about 50 million viewers.

Signor Bernardi got his first big break appearing in advertisements for Worthington beer on television, singing with a mouthful of ping-pong balls and juggling guitars. His repertoire also includes operatic excerpts and punk songs set to flamenco music.

Sunday's *News of the World*, though, disclosed that for a finale Signor Bernardi is apt to strip to his

socks before belting out his version of Luciano Pavarotti's greatest hit, *Nessun Dorma* from Puccini's opera *Turandot*, the tenor aria which became internationally known as the World Cup's official hymn.

Signor Bernardi, who had intended to borrow his brother-in-law's wedding outfit for tonight's appearance, was to have made the appearance for nothing more than a free ride to the ground, match tickets for himself and a friend, and admission to the VIP reception.

He said last night: "I am going to do this for the honour. It is a terrible disappointment I intended to do my best, and I am sure my appearance

would have been a success. I would have been fully dressed for the occasion."

An FA spokesman said: "It was the Italian Embassy who first suggested him and it is their decision that he should now not appear. They felt his cabaret work made him inappropriate for the task. A replacement is still being sought." An Italian Embassy spokesman said: "There are many fine singers from Italy. We must be able to find an excellent one who keeps his clothes on."

Tickets for the match are sold out and changing hands for up to £300.

Match previews, pages 44 and 48

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Unwanted best wishes upset the birthday beast



Skinner: caricature conceals a tragedy

IT WAS Dennis Skinner's birthday yesterday. The Beast of Bolsover turned 65, and puce Skinner was ambushed by the Prime Minister and MPs went wild.

Who has never been ambushed by a kindly intended surprise? Friends mean well, but we remember with mixed feelings a birthday we wanted to forget. To be the butt of anyone's joke inspires unease, but when the butt is a socialist working-class hero, the joke is a Conservative Prime Minister, and the nation's television cameras are recording every facial twitch, the unease is great.

Still, it was a neat ambush. Poker-faced Tim Devlin (C, Stockton S) asked John Major

what began as a poodling backbench question about the wonderfully increased incomes pensioners enjoy under the Tories. Reporters shut notebooks. Tony Blair — new Labour, no smile — stared at the rafters.

Then Devlin's question took a surprise turn: "And will this not comfort the Hon Member for Bolsover on his sixty-fifth birthday — today?"

Tories roared. Labour winced. Skinner turned his face to stone.

For his special day he was wearing the dark trousers, cream shirt, grey sports jacket and scarlet tie which, like his opinions, he has for a quarter century changed only to wash and darn. The hair, now streaked with grey, was slicked back in the style he must have adopted in the 50s, touring the pubs of Clay Cross doing Elvis impersonations. He looked, as ever, like a Teddy-boy dad on parents' day.

He scowled. The cheering grew. He tried to chat to Andrew Mackinlay beside him the would-be Beast of Thurrock who, being a Southerner, is undone by being able to laugh at himself. Could Dennis laugh at himself? He could not. Only a manly

might never smile again. He was forced to speak, now, and rose.

Mr Skinner really only has one speech, though it emerges in many forms. "It's the same the whole world over/ain't it all a bleeding shame?/it's the rich wot gets pleasure/And the poor wot gets the blame." Yesterday's version was an anti-Tory rant featuring Major as a floor-sweeper at the bank. Skinner's face was purple.

All laughed, as we do at these "local characters" life produces. But like most local characters, the caricature Dennis Skinner has become conceals a tragedy. Beneath the facade of rough diamond and redoubtable thug lies a

Labour to cut role of unpaid magistrates

Lay magistrates could be stripped of their power to hear contested cases in the youth courts under Labour Party plans to tackle crime by young people.

In an attempt to cut delays and bring a more hard-headed attitude towards juvenile offending, stipendiary magistrates and circuit judges would hear not-guilty pleas in the youth courts. Lay magistrates would only sentence convicted youngsters and deal with guilty pleas, according to proposals published yesterday.

TV licence move

Owners of second homes will have to buy additional television licences for each property from April 1, bringing in up to £18 million a year extra revenue for the BBC. Sets in caravans, boats and mobile homes will be exempt, the Heritage Department said.

Store doctors

Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, has ruled out the prospect of supermarkets employing family doctors to offer healthcare to customers. He said only those "within the NHS family" could be contracted to run surgeries and clinics.

Triplet saved

A man has saved his identical triplet's life by donating part of his stomach. Peter Jones, 40, from Southampton, donated 5ft of his intestine to Phillip, who lives near by, at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, in September, it has been disclosed.

Briton held

British diplomats in Nigeria are trying to locate Bruce Henderson, 42, from Chapel of Garioch, Aberdeenshire, who is working in a zone disputed by Nigeria and Cameroon and believed to have been arrested and held since December 22.

Actor mystery

Two teenage boys and a girl were questioned over the death of Barry Evans, 52, star of the 1967 film *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* and ITV's *Mind Your Language*. He was found at home in Claybrooke Magna, Leicestershire.

Baby death cause

The official cause of death of a baby allegedly battered to death by a British nanny near Boston was "blunt head trauma". Prosecutors had been waiting for the result of the post-mortem examination before deciding on new charges against Louise Woodward.

Court for singer

The former East 17 singer Brian Harvey is to appear before Bow Street magistrates on March 25 charged with assaulting a photographer. Mr Harvey, 22, allegedly assaulted Alan Vargas outside Stringfellow's in London on February 5.

Trial collapses

A Dublin murder trial collapsed yesterday after the appearance in newspapers of photographs of a clash between a photographer and a companion of one of the two men accused of shooting dead a 78-year-old cattle dealer.

Quality arrests

Police arrested 12 men in dawn raids across the Midlands in connection with a series of thefts from the homes of the aristocracy and celebrities. The so-called Quality Street gang is believed to have stolen property worth more than £1 million.

Fossil stolen

The fossilised footprint of a dicroidontid, a reptile that roamed the Earth before dinosaurs, has been cut with a rock saw from stone on a Crown Land beach near Elgin, Morayshire. Experts plan to remove and preserve the other 30 sets of prints.

MATTHEW PARRIS

POLITICAL SKETCH

Watson: nominated for *Breaking the Waves*

Howard says police must seek prior approval to bug

BY JAMES LANDALE AND RICHARD FORD

MICHAEL HOWARD last night announced concessions to his plans to give the police fresh powers to enter and bug private homes and offices.

The Home Secretary said that the police would be forced to seek prior approval from a senior judge, known as a commissioner, before they could enter and bug homes, offices and hotel bedrooms, except in urgent cases. They would also have to seek approval before bugging lawyers, journalists and doctors if there were reasonable grounds that the operation could affect professional privileges.

The compromise, reached by Mr Howard and Jack Straw, his Labour counterpart, will form an amendment to the Police Bill during its committee stage next week. In its original form, the Bill — which has its second reading in the Commons today — would have enabled chief constables to authorise bugging operations while seeking a commissioner's approval retrospectively. Mr Howard had insisted that prior approval would hamper operational effectiveness.

But the Bill suffered defeats in the Lords after peers voiced

concern over the implications for civil liberty of giving police the right to bug without prior approval. Peers passed two amendments, from Labour and the Liberal Democrats, which backed prior approval.

Mr Straw said he was pleased that the Government had now accepted Labour's key demand that prior approval should be given. However, Labour conceded that prior approval would not be needed before the police could bug Arthur Daley-style "lock-ups" and garages, as the party had originally demanded.

Announcing the changes in a written Commons answer, Mr Howard said that the Government had met the peers' concerns. Home Office sources said that they had improved Labour's amendment by tightening up guidelines for how commissioners would give their approval.

A commissioner will approve a bugging operation only if he is satisfied there are reasonable grounds for believing the action is likely to be of substantial value in the prevention or detection of serious crime and that what the action seeks to achieve could not reasonably be achieved by other means". This effectively

means a commissioner would not be given freedom to second guess an operational decision by the police.

Mr Howard also emphasised that the initial decision to authorise a bugging operation still lay with chief constables, who would remain accountable to the courts. The Liberal Democrats had wanted circuit judges to authorise operations. Alan Beith, the Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman, said that the compromise was full of loopholes.

Sir James Sharples, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said that the police were reasonably satisfied with the changes. "It was quite clear from the Lords and conversations with Mr Howard and Mr Straw that people wanted to see an element of prior approval in this legislation."

The Home Office also offered reassurances about the sanctity under the Bill of the Catholic confessional, which had concerned the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume. A spokesman said: "The police are happy to give an undertaking not to mount surveillance operations in circumstances covered by the Seal of Confession."

ANDRE CAMARA

Oscar triumph

Continued from page 1 wood blockbusters were trounced by films made with less money but more imagination: *Shine*, the searing true story of a troubled Australian pianist, and *Fargo*, a darkly comic North Dakota thriller, both won seven nominations, while Kenneth Branagh's four-hour, \$10-million Hamlet won four, including one for his adaptation of the play.

Of the Best Picture nominees, only TriStar's *Jerry Maguire* was made by a major studio. The others are *The English Patient*, *Fargo*, *Secrets and Lies* and *Shine*.

Geoffrey Rush, *Shine*'s madly mumbly star, has entered the Oscar race as favourite for Best Actor after winning a Golden Globe last month, despite competition from Woody Harrelson (*The People vs Larry Flynt*) and Billy Bob Thornton (*Sling Blade*).

Diane Keaton and Frances McDormand were the only non-British Best Actress nominees, for their performances in *Marvin's Room* and *Fargo*.

Britain's Marianne Jean-Baptiste, nominated for Best Supporting Actress for her role as a black daughter in search of her white mother in *Secrets and Lies*, finds herself among legends on a shortlist that includes Joan Allen (for *The Crucible*), Lauren Bacall (for her role opposite Barbra Streisand in *The Mirror Has Two Faces*), Juliette Binoche (*The English Patient*) and Barbara Hershey (*The Portrait of a Lady*).

Speaking from Sydney yesterday, Minghella said: "It's

midnight here and it's raining, but I would be happy even if it was a blizzard. With themes like Herodotus, literature and Rudyard Kipling, this film scared a lot of people off. Everybody told me I couldn't adapt it everybody said I couldn't make the film. I certainly feel vindicated."

Wif Stevenson, director of the British Film Institute, said: "The BFI is delighted at the continued strong showing of British films and in particular *The English Patient*. Minghella's screenwriting and directing talents first came to our attention with a showing of *Cello* at the 1990 London Film Festival. It went on to become the incredibly successful *Truly, Madly, Deeply*.

Mike Leigh, who like Minghella was nominated for his screenplay as well as his directing, called his film's five nominations "amazing" and "wonderful". They will not induce him to start making films in Hollywood, however.

"I love going to Los Angeles and people find my films intriguing," he said. "But the idea of actually making a film there is a grim one."

In what has become a traditional Oscar footnote, Bristol's Aardman Animation studio has won its sixth consecutive nomination for Best Short Animated Film, this one entitled *Wart Pig* and directed by Peter Lord, whose previous claims to fame included discovering Nick Park, the creator of the animated characters Wallace and Gromit.

Speaking from Sydney yesterday, Minghella said: "It's

Telegraph sales claim rejected

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

NEWSPAPER industry auditors last night rejected a complaint by the Telegraph Group against News International, owner of *The Times*, over the way the company accounted for sales of the Monday edition, sold at a reduced price of 10p. The Audit Bureau of Circulations said that it could not agree to the Telegraph's request that the Monday sales be removed from circulation figures.

The Telegraph had complained about a *Times* marketing scheme, designed to ensure that newsagents got at least 10p for every copy sold on Mondays. Under the scheme, retailers would receive 8p from the 10p cover price plus a 3p marketing bonus.

Ray Hall, of the ABC, said he had to reject the complaint because *The Times* had caused the marketing bonus from September 13. The terms of the complaint were, therefore, inaccurate. From September 14, the Telegraph increased the marketing bonus by including sales made through a cut-price subscription offer in its full-price circulation figures.

News International said that the subscription sales should be counted as "sales at a lesser price".

The distinction is important because advertisers base their rates on full price sales. The average daily circulation of *The Times* in January was 766,922, up 11.5 per cent on year. Sales of *The Daily Telegraph* were up 8.5 per cent at 1,142,094.

Sinn Fein accused of poll rigging

BY NICHOLAS WATT

SINN FEIN was accused last night of planning to cheat in the general election after it emerged that prominent republicans have multiple entries on the electoral register in Belfast. Two convicted terrorists are registered on the rolls for the separate parliamentary constituencies of West Belfast and North Belfast.

Terence Clarke, a bodyguard for Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein leader, and Sean O'Neill, a republican from West Belfast, were among five men registered on a draft roll living in a two-bedroom flat in a Falls Road tower block. Their names, which were slightly misspelt, have now been removed from the Divis tower block register, but are still registered at a nearby flat and at separate addresses in North Belfast.

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Dorrell slapped down

One senior MP felt Mr Major had been happy to cut down to size a minister whose leadership ambitions "are worn on his sleeve".

Central Office at first tried to play down Mr Major's outburst by suggesting that Mr Dorrell's constitutional brief had been intended to apply only for until the party conference. But that line did not hold for long when it emerged that he had been put up by party headquarters several times since then to speak on constitutional issues, including an appearance in a television debate on their patch.

The delight of the Right at Mr Dorrell's discomfort reflected the underlying jealousies among supporters of the Cabinet ministers who would be candidates in any post-election leadership contest. Mr Dorrell is felt to have made important strides since last summer, but there is resentment on the Right that he has done so by shifting from the Left, appearing to "trim" on such issues as Europe, and speaking out on areas outside his health brief.

Mr Dorrell's friends said that no one had told him that he was not doing the job and that he would continue to do so when asked. And the Health Secretary himself was unabashed. He told ITN that

100 GREATEST BOOKS of the 20th CENTURY. How many HAVE YOU READ?

1 The Lord of the Rings	J.R.R. Tolkien
2 Nineteen Eighty-Four	George Orwell
3 Animal Farm	George Orwell
4 Ulysses	James Joyce
5 Catch-22	Joseph Heller
6 The Catcher in the Rye	J.D. Salinger
7 To Kill a Mockingbird	Harper Lee
8 One Hundred Years of Solitude	Gabriel García Márquez
9 The Grapes of Wrath	John Steinbeck
10 Trainspotting	Irvine Welsh

If you haven't read all the 100 greatest books of the century (as voted by Waterstone's customers and Channel 4 viewers), you've still got something to look forward to. If you haven't read most of them, you've got some catching up to do. If you've hardly read any of them, welcome to the twentieth century.

For an indication of where you might like to start, try the thoughts of Germaine Greer reviewing the list in "W" Magazine, available in all Waterstone's shops, priced £1.

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Bugging of cell was key to cracking cast-iron alibis

THE police case against David Howells hung by the vital thread of secret tape-recordings of his conversations with his two boys while they were held in police cells.

Howells had a cast-iron alibi that he was miles from the murder scene, playing in a darts match. But tapes of conversations with his sons confirmed detectives' suspicions of his complicity in a cover-up, if not in the murder itself.

Simon Hawkesworth, QC, Howells' counsel, argued before trial that the tapes should not be admitted on the ground that the bugging broke the European Convention on Human Rights by invading the family's privacy. He

also claimed that the discussion by Howells and his boys of their case carried the same privilege as conversations between a solicitor and his client, protected through professional privilege.

However, the protections against bugging are being eroded. Under the Police Bill now going through Parliament, bugging of certain conversations would be allowed subject to safeguards.

Yesterday the Home Secretary was forced to announce further safeguards to the new bugging provisions after his defeat over the Bill in the Lords. Now police will be required to seek prior approval by a commissioner before bugging

While debate rages on bugging, the body of evidence supporting the admissibility of tapes recorded in police cells is well established. Paul Wilkinson and Frances Gibb report

homes, offices and hotel rooms, except in emergencies. They would need prior approval before bugging conversations between lawyers and clients, doctors and patients or journalistic operations, wherever these take place.

The Bill, which puts police surveillance on a statutory footing, was produced partly as a result of a case which was heard in the Lords

last summer and is expected to go to the European Court of Human Rights. The law lords had rejected a claim by Sultan Khan that his privacy had been intruded upon by a bug placed by South Yorkshire Police in the Sheffield home of a suspected drug trafficker. The tape picked up Khan's admission that he too was involved. The Lords upheld rulings of both the trial

judge and the Court of Appeal that the recording was admissible.

At present, "intrusive surveillance" needs authorisation only by a chief constable on the basis of government guidelines. In certain cases, the chief constable can delegate the right to authorise. But judges, lawyers and many others have argued the need for an outside authority regulator.

However, the body of evidence supporting the admissibility of recordings made in police cells is well established.

To bug and catch Howells. Detective Superintendent Gary Haigh had to get permission from his force's Assistant Chief Constable, Tom Cook. Home Office guidelines state that, in such cases, the authorising officer should satisfy himself that four criteria are met: that the investigation involves serious crime; normal investigation methods have been tried and failed or are doomed to fail; there is good reason to believe use of the equipment would be likely to lead to an arrest and conviction (or to prevent acts of terrorism); and use of equipment must be feasible.

The guidelines also stress that the degree of intrusion should match the seriousness of the offence. A visiting room at the cells was wired up before Howells' sons Glenn and John were arrested. The

dozen tapes that resulted from chats between father and sons were strongly incriminating and police had their case.

Technically, police can be sued for civil trespass if "caught in the act", but the act is not regarded as unlawful. Last year, PC John Burris from South Yorkshire Police was jailed for four years for his part in a car-stealing ring on evidence from bugs in his own patrol car and his station communications room.

As early as 1966 the Court of Appeal upheld the conviction for murder of two Bradford men based on a tape of their conversation in cells in the city's police station.

Alcoholic who was intimidated by an intellectual wife

REPORTS BY PAUL WILKINSON

THE FATHER

DAVID HOWELLS was an alcoholic who admitted that he failed to protect his two children from years of emotional and physical abuse at the hand of their tyrannical mother.

A maintenance filter by trade, he was less intellectually inferior to Mrs Howells, a teacher with a university degree. She capitalised on her superiority by controlling the running of the house and finances and utterly dominating her husband and, later, her children.

Howells sought solace at Huddersfield's Primrose Hill Conservative Club, where he was vice-president. He was in the darts team at the club, a pastime which provided him with a "perfect alibi" on the night his sons murdered his wife, but the greatest enjoyment he got at the club was from the beer it sold. As his wife's deteriorated, Howells began to drink more, sparking even more arguments. "She'd come to the point where she thought I drank too much for my

father because they realised he would be the prime suspect. Their first attempt was abandoned when the boys' nerve cracked, but a week later the plan went smoothly. Glenn, then aged 15, crept into the house and battered his mother to death with a hammer. John, then 14, disposed of the murder weapon and his brother's bloody clothing.

The boys later told police that they had gone out to exercise their dog. Glenn had returned home first to discover a teapot and canteens which had held £100 lying on the kitchen floor. He found his mother's body slumped against the sofa on a beanbag. She had been bludgeoned to death by at least ten blows. When John returned he stayed outside. But blood spots were found on the carpet under an overturned desk, indicating that it had been trodden after the killing. Blood was also found on Glenn's socks, but the only place on the carpet where it had been trodden on was the position where the

boys had stood. Examination of a jacket worn by John revealed spots from flying blood on both sleeves, which he claimed had come when his mother cut herself preparing food some days earlier.

The next day, when all three went to identify Mrs Howells'

body, Glenn showed little emotion until the others cried.

Even then, he soon regained his composure. A policeman noticed Glenn winking twice at his brother and smirked.

However, police were unable to shake the boys' story. To break it, they decided to arrest them and covertly tape

their conversations. Graham Dearden, Mr Howells' solicitor, said: "Anxious consideration will be given to the prospect of an appeal. The primary grounds will probably be the decision of the judge to admit the covert tapes.

David was devastated by the verdict, but he has the hope

that the Court of Appeal will allow an appeal. The verdict today came as a complete shock."

Russell Hirst, David Howells' closest friend, who had a secret 12-year affair with Mrs Howells, said: "I am glad it is all over and that justice has been done for Eve." He is the

beneficiary of Mrs Howells' estate because of the conviction of her family, but yesterday he said: "At the moment I want to donate the money to charity. I don't know which one, but Eve's money is not something I want on my hands. I have no feelings for the boys or David."

Childhood torments of boys who turned killer

THE SONS

THE brothers John and Glenn Howells were thought to be responsible for a string of petty crimes in their neighbourhood (Paul Wilkinson writes). They were known locally as the Kray Twins but the nickname was inappropriate. The real Kray twins at least loved their mother. The Howells boys hated theirs.

Since their youngest days, she had tormented them emotionally and physically, rarely letting them play out, and was known to drag them in by the hair if they did not come immediately when they were called. She shrieked, swore and spat at them as toddlers and regularly smacked them on the back, bottom and legs, targeting the oldest, Glenn, more than her "favourite", John. Margaret Drake, their next-door neighbour at the time, said that she would always regret not calling in social services. She recalled how Mrs Howells said she had tied them to the kitchen table when they were two or three and added: "We used to dread them going in for bathtime because of the

bed, and diving for the freezer when it was opened, and eating the contents as quickly as possible.

His 6-stone mother kept a lock on the freezer, wrote a diary of what she was going to eat weeks in advance, and grounded the children for two weeks if even an apple core was found in their bedroom.

On one occasion John was violently ill after Mrs Howells made him eat a portion of sprouts that he had left from his dinner a week before.

In the view of a criminal psychologist, brought in by police to help to find the killer, she was a "control freak".

John was an affectionate child, unlike his brother, who preferred the company of men. Mary Dyson, Mrs Howells' stepmother, said: "She seemed to have it in for Glenn for some reason. She seemed to despise him."

He was allowed to shower only twice a week and became his mother's "body slave", according to one psychologist.

He was forced to massage her back as she stood naked and dig dirt from her toenails.

He changed schools and eventually settled down, but his behaviour was still extremely erratic. It included opening cans and eating a few mouthfuls before leaving them in buckets by the door, biting around the edge of the

screams. It wasn't just the normal cry of a child misbehaving — it was screams as though she were drowning them.

Their mother had never got over the death of her first child, Gareth, who died aged three days in 1978. Glenn, born two years later, often complained that she preferred her dead son to him.

When John was about four and Glenn six, their mother would frequently take their favourite cuddly toys and hold a lighter to them, threatening to burn them as she listened to her children crying and pleading with her not to. At the age of five, John was referred to a child psychologist after stealing apples from other children's lunchboxes at school.

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bed, and diving for the freezer when it was opened, and eating the contents as quickly as possible.

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He was forced to massage her back as she stood naked and dig dirt from her toenails.

Disciplinarian who created atmosphere of fear in class

THE MOTHER

IN the school where she taught, she was known to pupils as "Evil Howells".

Some colleagues at Huddersfield's Newsome High School tactfully described Eve Howells as a "strict disciplinarian". Others were more forthright in their condemnation of the history and religious affairs teacher who prompted a stream of complaints from parents and pupils.

Maureen Smith, a teacher, who described Mrs Howells as very disturbed, said: "She maintained an atmosphere of fear in a classroom such as I have never experienced in 26

years." Mrs Howells read history at York University before taking her teaching diploma at Leeds University. She started work at Newsome High School in 1987 as a supply teacher before being given a full-time post in 1990.

John Chadwick, head of humanities, said: "She was a firm teacher who, on occasions, classified pupils for not producing work." He said she was often sharp and abrupt with pupils and tended to deal with them head-on rather than use indirect

methods that could have been more successful.

"She had a formal style and high expectations of her pupils," Mr Chadwick said. "She expected work to be done and, if it was not, she would challenge them about it. She had very little tact."

"She did not understand the effect she could have on the children. They were often upset at the way she spoke to them."

Some of her colleagues suspected that she drank heavily and a school trip was once disrupted when she was found, apparently unconscious, in a hedge row.



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John Howells, left, and Glenn, right, tied up, and dragged by the hair

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Dementia therapy might produce star students

Scientists close to devising pills to boost memory

BY JEREMY LAURANCE
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

A NEW generation of drugs capable of turning ordinary students into double-first graduates could be available within five years, scientists said yesterday.

More than 200 chemical compounds that will boost memory and learning ability are being developed by pharmaceutical companies in a race to find an effective treatment for Alzheimer's disease and other kinds of dementia. Some scientists believe that these "memory pills" will also lift normal mental performance to "super-normal" levels. Animals given the drugs have shown remarkable improvements in learning.

James McGaugh, director of the Centre for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory at the University of California, said: "On the basis of animal experiments I believe drugs will be developed that will have not just modest but also strong memory-enhancing capabilities in human beings. Some of my colleagues disagree about the likely magnitude of the change, but if it happens in laboratory animals why shouldn't it happen in humans?"

There is only one cognitive enhancer, Tacrine, licensed for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, but its effects are modest — slowing mental deterioration by about six months — and its side-effects, such as liver damage, severe. Other drugs with fewer side-effects are becoming available, and the early trials of a new class of cognitive enhancers called amphetamines, that have a different mechanism of action, are said to have produced remarkable effects in humans.

Professor McGaugh, who was speaking to the press after an international conference on the use of drugs to enhance cognitive function, said that



James McGaugh, who believes "smart drugs" will have strong memory-enhancing capabilities

although the new drugs were intended to help those with memory disorders they were likely to have wide appeal in a competitive commercial world among students sitting exams and ambitious workers wishing to give themselves an edge over rivals.

However, he said that the implications of giving the drugs to youngsters should be considered before they became a reality, he said, as they

will be while learning or

When forgetfulness need not herald the onset of Alzheimer's

There is a tie worn by old soldiers which is patterned by pictures of elephants with knots tied in their trunks. The organization CRAFT — which stands for Can't Remember A Flipping Thing, or words to that effect — was the tie for whose memory is beginning to fail; in return a recipient makes a donation to Army welfare funds.

With the advent of arcocept, later to be joined on the chemists' shelves by metrifonate, which are safer alternative drugs to tacrine, make CRAFT's tie a period piece, as benign memory loss becomes an uncommon as diphtheria! Benign memory loss is as much part of growing older as greying hair, baldness, sagging skin and a pot belly. Everybody who lives long enough will suffer from it. Unfortunately, forgetfulness is also an early symptom of Alzheimer's disease, and other forms of dementia.

The essential features of all forms of dementia which distinguish them from the usual inability of the over-60s to find their keys and spectacles or to remember the names of their colleagues, is that there is a general intellectual decline, lack of judgment, and loss of sense of time and place (so that patients easily become lost). In dementia

memory loss patients revert to the language, or accents, of their youth.

Memory loss when it is a result of psychological rather than physical troubles is not always complete and may cover only certain aspects of life, usually those which are most disturbing. Having a couple of drinks improves memory, even in the old, but the mechanism for this or by which this is achieved is complex. More than two drinks and memory starts to decline rapidly. A heavy binge and the memory of anything which happened while drinking may be lost.

Drugs like arcocept and metrifonate help memory in an appreciable number of cases but do not seem to benefit other symptoms of mental deterioration. However, as memory is essential to learning, a loss of memory can be a grave disadvantage. Memory loss is divided into immediate (forgetfulness about what has just happened), intermediate (when it covers the past few days) and long term (which includes childhood memories, the last to go). In some cases of

memory loss patients revert to the language, or accents, of their youth.

Memory loss when it is a result of psychological rather than physical troubles is not always complete and may cover only certain aspects of life, usually those which are most disturbing. Having a couple of drinks improves memory, even in the old, but the mechanism for this or by which this is achieved is complex. More than two drinks and memory starts to decline rapidly. A heavy binge and the memory of anything which happened while drinking may be lost.

When memory loss is caused by long-term overindulgence of alcohol coupled with malnutrition, patients often resort to confabulation, which is the medical term for making up that which cannot be remembered. There is also a psychological condition in which people unconsciously rewrite history so that they become genuinely convinced

that their account of events, which is usually more flattering than the reality, is true.

This phenomenon accounts for the spectacle of an otherwise perfectly honest, respectable person lying like a trooper in their autobiography, or even in court. About two years ago a patient consulted me about a sudden loss of memory which lasted for about 12 hours and extended back to the time before he had married. The man looked around at his family, gathered around the dinner table, had no idea who they were, but luckily thought they were both amusing and charming.

The patient could not remember what he did or where he was but had total recall of his undergraduate days and university learning. Next morning his memory returned; he had suffered from transient global amnesia, a form of transient ischaemic attack in which a clot has lodged for a time in one of the blood vessels in that part of the brain which is concerned with memory.

Drugs of the benzodiazepine group also cause intermediate retrograde memory loss, useful when they are taken when undergoing a minor surgical procedure, but a nuisance if a long-lasting sleeping pill, such as Mogadon, has been used.

Health alert over TV ad's runny eggs

BY JOANNA BALE

A TV ADVERT for eggs is to be studied by Whitehall advisers because it shows runny yolks without a health warning. The Department of Health said that vulnerable groups such as the elderly and pregnant women should eat only solid whites and yolks because of a salmonella risk.

"We will look at the advertisement as a matter of urgency," a spokesman said. "It's really up to the Independent Television Commission to make sure advertisements, when necessary, carry health and safety advice."

The £1 million campaign by the British Egg Industry Council, the first for 15 years, shows fingers of toast being dipped into a liquid yolk. Andrew Joror, of the council, said: "If you buy from a reputable retailer, store properly in a fridge and eat before the best-before date, we don't see any risk."

Research confirms BSE can be passed to calves

BY MICHAEL HORNSEY, AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

COWS can pass "mad cow" disease to their calves although the risk is slightly lower than was at first thought, a scientist conducting research for the Government said yesterday.

The disclosure confirms interim findings last August which the Ministry of Agriculture said had given a false picture because it had been forced to release them before they had been fully analysed.

Confirmation of maternal transmission is certain to stiffen resistance of some European Union states to easing the ban on British beef and could oblige the Government to slaughter more cattle.

Richard Peters, Agricultural Attaché at the German embassy, said: "This will harden attitudes in my country. In recent weeks officials here have been telling me that they did not think transmission was occurring after all."

Germany is slaughtering 2,600 cattle imported from Britain and considering whether a further 12,000 born to them should be culled. If the full cull goes ahead, Germany will certainly press Britain to take similar action.

The results of the analysis, based on a seven-year experiment, were unveiled yesterday by Professor Roy Anderson, director of the Wellcome Trust research centre for the study of the epidemiology of infectious diseases at Oxford University.

Results show that about 8 per cent of calves born to mothers in the later stages of incubating BSE will inherit the disease, compared with the estimate of 10 per cent made last August.

The results probably do not fully reflect the true picture because it is difficult to know exactly when the disease appears in the animal.

Professor Anderson said the rate of maternal transmission was too low to change existing forecasts that BSE would virtually die out by 2000 or 2001. He doubted whether culling the offspring of infected mothers would speed eradication of the disease.

Leading cleric says royal divorce 'is bound to have important consequences'

Church urged to allow remarriage in adultery cases

By RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

A LEADING cleric yesterday called for the Church of England to permit second marriages in cases of adultery or desertion.

The Very Rev David Edwards, Provost Emeritus of Southwark Cathedral, and one of the Church's most influential retired clergymen, says that while divorce "is undeniably one of the most devastating of the evils in our society", the Church should look again at working out a process whereby some second marriages can be authorised, as is already possible in the Anglican Church in Scotland and Ireland.

Dr Edwards's proposals are published in the foreword to the 1997 *Church of England Year Book*, published during the first National Marriage Week and as the Church faces a future with a divorced King as its Supreme Governor.

He writes: "After great contention with the Queen's time on the throne, the divorce of the Prince and Princess of Wales is bound to have important consequences, particularly after the admission of adultery (rather than penitence for it) included by both in generally lamentable television programmes."

The choice of Dr Edwards, a leading liberal of the same era as Lord Runcie, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, is significant given the agenda-setting nature of the foreword.

Its contents, ostensibly a review of the past year, will be noted carefully by all members of the General Synod, including its bishops, many of whom are known to feel that change to the Church's traditional stance on marriage is overdue.

The growing pressure to permit second marriages after divorce is interpreted by some as an indication that the Church is preparing to accept a possible remarriage of the Prince of Wales. Church leaders have so far remained

silent on the consequences of the royal divorce, which Dr Edwards says is "understandable".

At the moment, remarriage in church is forbidden where a former spouse is still living.

But because secular law sanctions remarriage, some clergy ignore the church's official line and marry divorcees anyway.

Practice varies from diocese to diocese, with most clergy offering the "blessing" service for divorcees, which does not contain the lifelong vows of fidelity, and which usually takes place after a secular

ceremony.

However, these figures also include some second marriages, and no central figures exist for blessings.

Dr Edwards, who was appointed OBE in 1995, says it is not realistic to pretend that the position of the monarch in Church or State is the same as it was four centuries ago.

Any divorce is a tragedy, he says, and adds: "But there needs to be no harm in stating the obvious truth that the publicity (both sought and intruded) about unhappy relationships has destroyed much of the glamour which previously surrounded the House of Windsor."

He says that the current trend for blessings to take place after civic weddings was "ambiguous" and that instead there should be a process comparable to that of the Roman Catholic Church, which allows for degrees of nullity to be granted, but which denies communion to divorcees who remarry without an annulment.

Dr Edwards also challenges the Church's relationship with the State, suggesting that church leaders should begin talks "with a view to making some new arrangements which would preferably not constitute a clean break with the past."



Edwards: remarriage acceptable in some cases

wedding in a register office. Dr Edwards cites Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as a sanction for divorce after adultery: "They were told, 'A man who divorces his wife must give her a note of dismissal'. But what I tell you is this: If a man divorces his wife for any cause other than unchastity, he involves her in adultery; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery'." (Matthew 5, 31-32 New English Bible).

He also refers to St Paul as allowing divorce on desertion by a non-Christian spouse: "If



Lord Mackay reiterated his commitment to the ideal of marriage as a union for life between a man and woman

Mackay comes to the defence of mothers who stay at home

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Lord Chancellor has called for the Government to take a lead in promoting a "positive and realistic" image of marriage, coming out in strong defence of mothers who stay at home. Lord Mackay of Clashfern said yesterday that it was important to get over the message that parenting and home-building were worthwhile activities.

"No woman should be made to feel apologetic about describing herself as a housewife," he said. "Caring for children is extremely hard work and this needs to be understood and respected, not ignored." Nor should fathers be ashamed to spend more time with their children, he said, adding that "no one's last words are ever: 'I wish I'd spent more time at the office'."

Dr Edwards also challenges the Church's relationship with the State, suggesting that church leaders should begin talks "with a view to making some new arrangements which would preferably not constitute a clean break with the past."

Yesterday he reiterated his personal commitment to the

Lord Mackay, the minister responsible for marriage support, was addressing an event in London to mark National Marriage Week. He called for efforts to reverse projections that marriage would decline from 57 per cent of the adult population in 1992 to 49 per cent by 2020. "The first thing we can do is promote a positive image of marriage among the public, especially among young people."

Last year the Lord Chancellor found himself consistently the target of a group of rightwingers who claimed his divorce reforms, including the scrapping of "quidic" divorces and increasing mediation in marriage break-ups, would undermine the institution of marriage.

Yesterday he reiterated his personal commitment to the

Christian ideal of marriage as a union for life between a man and woman. But it was an ideal just as relevant to those of other faiths and to a secular society, he said.

In spite of the fall in numbers of couples marrying, Lord Mackay said he rejected the view that marriage was "outdated". Its advantage over cohabitation was that it combined a "private relationship between two people with a public commitment".

First, the Government could promote a positive and realistic image of marriage among young people and the public generally. It had begun this with the Family Law Act 1996, which reforms the divorce laws and provides a procedure expressly aimed at saving "saneable marriages".

Secondly, the Government

could show a greater awareness of the impact of all policies on marriage and family life and encourage opinion-formers to promote marriage positively. "I believe that lifelong commitment to one person is still the ideal to which the majority of young people aspire. I also believe that it is by far and away the best environment for the birth and care of children. Thirdly, the Government could back a full range of marriage-support services."

Lord Mackay said 40 bids

had been received for funding

that he was offering to organisations providing marriage-support projects. But there was a long way to go before there was a full network of services in place. Marriage preparation, in particular was relatively undeveloped.

Last laugh

A man who found a stolen joke book belonging to the comedian Bob Monkhouse was cleared of dishonesty at Marlborough Street Magistrate's Court, London. The CPS decided to drop a charge of handling stolen goods against Stanley Allen Swaine, 47, a management consultant.

Star saves pub

Nick Banks, drummer with the band Pulp, has bought his local pub, the Washington, to prevent it becoming an Irish theme pub, as happened to two near by in Sheffield. His friend Mick Deeley, the landlord, said: "We didn't want our favourite pub to become Padddy McGinty's Goat."

Mystery beast

Farmers have been warned to look out for "a large Puma-like animal" after nine sheep were found mauled to death on a farm at Snaithorpe, near Scarborough. The carcasses were covered in claw marks with their stomachs ripped open at South Moor Farm on the edge of the North York Moors.

Claim settled

A former police firearms instructor whose hearing was impaired has settled for undisclosed damages out of court. John Wilson, 57, from Stirling, was suing William Wilson, Chief Constable of Central Scotland Police, for £175,000, claiming he was given inadequate earmuffs.

Player charged

The snooker player Silvino Francisco was remanded in custody by Dover magistrates accused of smuggling cannabis worth £155,000, allegedly found in a car at the port. Mr Francisco, 50, once ranked among the world's top ten players, is due to appear in court again tomorrow.

Foxtrot bravo

A former wartime pilot is taking a PhD in ballroom dancing. Harry West, 75, of Bristol, will write a study of expression and aesthetics in the foxtrot, waltz, quickstep, Viennese waltz and tango at the Laban Centre of Movement and Dance in London, run by City University.

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T.1B2

Church organ fans offended by wit who pulled out all the stops

By ALAN HAMILTON

A MUSIC publisher thought he was playing *con brio* when he composed an advertisement for his extensive collection of church organ music with liberal use of puns and *double entendres* referring to the instrument. But the reaction of readers of the *Church Music Quarterly* was positively *furious*.

The innuendo is now *diminuendo*. A reader in Surrey complained to the Advertising Standards Authority, which ruled yesterday that the catalogue of vulgar

it was "likely to cause serious or widespread offence" and warned the advertiser not to do it again.

Barry Brunton, the offending advertiser who owns the Cambridgeshire music publisher Oeconomus, was unable to resist such dubious gems as *Too Hot To Handel*, and doubtful references to the 19th-century church music composer John Bacchus Dykes.

Mr Brunton was unrepresentable yesterday. *"Church Music Quarterly"* is a boring magazine, we wanted to live it up a bit and draw attention

to ourselves," he said. "So we thought we would do an advertisement full of *double entendres* and see if it could get in the magazine."

Church Music Quarterly said it checked advertisements "generally", but not for indecency or immorality.

But Mr Brunton remained puzzled that, while he cannot have his advertisement in a magazine read by members of church choirs all over the world, Channel 4 has been allowed to screen a series on the subject of church music under the title *Howard Goodall's Organ Works*.

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THE TIMES WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12 1997

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GENERAL ELECTION THIS SATURDAY

Running The National Lottery is like organising a General Election every Saturday. Instead of voting slips, we have to print and deliver an average of 18.5 million playslips every week. We have to process the choices of around 28 million people from 24,000 outlets all over the country. Like constituencies, we have to check every single entry. Our computers can deal with over 4,000 entries a second, each one a selection from over 13.9 million possible permutations. And while General Elections may create winners once every five years, we have the organisation to pay out to around a million winners a week, every week. So a General Election this Saturday? What's new?



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One-year AS level will offer flexibility without cutting standards, says Shephard

Exam revamp to give sixth-formers wider study choice

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

PLANS to toughen up some A-level syllabuses and provide a wider range of courses in sixth forms were announced yesterday by Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary.

More rigorous A-level courses are to start next year, at the same time as a revamped AS level to be taken in one year, rather than the present two. The changes are intended to encourage greater breadth of study, increase flexibility and reduce the failure rate at A level without compromising standards.

Mrs Shephard has accepted most of the recommendations from a review of qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds by Sir Ron Dearing, chairman of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority. She said the reforms would enhance quality and consistency on academic and vocational courses.

Students on both types of course will also be examined on the "key skills" of communication, numeracy and use of information technology. Only those passing the course will be eligible for a new Advanced Diploma embracing A levels and vocational qualifications.

Under the Government's blueprint, most teenagers taking the academic route will embark on three AS levels on entry to the sixth form or college. After taking examinations at the end of the first year, they will then have the



Shephard: hopes reforms will cut A-level failure

option of converting the course into a full A level with a second year of study, or "cashing" their grades and claiming an AS-level qualification.

The AS level will continue to be worth half an A level on the university entrance scale. John Dunford, past president of the Secondary Heads Association, said he expected AS levels to be used increasingly for university offers.

The vocational alternative for sixth-formers will continue to be the Advanced GNVQ, which is worth two A levels and already includes assessment on key skills. The new framework is intended to encourage students to mix GNVQs and A levels where appropriate.

Under Mrs Shephard's A-

level changes grammar will account for 25 per cent of the marks in modern language papers and will be given greater emphasis in English. New "subject cores" would mean a calculator-free paper in maths exams and more stress on pre-1900 literature in English. History syllabuses would require a "substantial" element of British history and some pre-1900 study.

"People have asked why we are changing the A level if there is nothing wrong with it," Mrs Shephard said. But while studies had "positive messages", she said, they had also identified areas which needed to be strengthened so that the quality of the qualification was not compromised.

The measures will place new restrictions on modular A levels, which are increasingly popular. Students will be allowed only one resake of any module tested during the course and none for the last module, which is worth 30 per cent of total marks.

Despite widespread fears over the quality of modular A levels, Ofsted reported yesterday that standards were comparable to A levels examined in one go at the end of the course.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, said that the AS level would make students work harder in their lower-sixth year.



Learning curve: children in a reception class at Wandle primary school in Wandsworth, southwest London

New boys and girls face testing time

BY THE TIME today's infants leave school they will be no strangers to exams. The class of 2011 will have run a formidable gamut of tests.

At four and five pupils starting school in 1998 will take the inaugural national "baseline" tests during their first half-term. The assessments, in English, mathematics and personal/social development, will last 20 minutes at most and the results will be sent to parents. Methods of testing will vary, with some schools choosing a tick-list of abilities and others writing a brief assessment.

At seven: pupils will take three hours of national curriculum tests in English and mathematics during the spring or summer term and will also be assessed by their teacher in science. Parents will be told their child's grade in relation to the national average. The Government aims to publish schools' averages soon.

At 11: children will sit their second wave of national curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, lasting five hours in all. They will again be graded against the national average. Tables of every school's average results will be published for the first time next month.

At 14: the final round of national curriculum tests in the three core subjects, which take seven hours. There are

plans to publish school averages nationally.

At 15: pupils will take their first public exams. The new short-course GCSE, worth half a full GCSE, was available last September. More new subjects will be offered but the most popular are likely to be religious studies and history or geography, taken over one or two years.

At 16: pupils will sit GCSEs and from next September will be able to take part in one General National Vocational Qualifications. These two-year vocational courses in subjects such as engineering, business and manufacturing are worth two GCSEs. GCSE results tables for schools have been

published since 1992.

At 17: pupils will be able to sit the new Advanced Supplementary Level examinations. Designed to mirror the first year of A level, they can be taken as half an A level for university entry or carried on for another year to become a full A level.

At 18: students will take A levels and Advanced GNVQs, the vocational alternative currently worth two A levels. There are plans for an Advanced GNVQ taking half the time and worth the same as an A level. Bright pupils can also take Special Papers, known as S levels, in 20 subjects.

Leading article, page 19

Shopping for 'soft option' courses prompts call for fewer boards

BY DAVID CHARTER
EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

GILLIAN SHEPHERD called yesterday for a cut in the number of examination boards to prevent schools shopping around for "soft option" courses. She said the Government favoured three main boards, to cover all academic and vocational examinations, replacing the four academic and three job-related boards. Mrs Shephard out-

lined her views as Ofsted school inspectors yesterday criticised the A-level boards for "patchy" attempts to ensure they all offered the same standard.

The examination boards said they were already moving towards mergers. The academic University of London board has formed Edexcel with Btec, one of the vocational groups, and the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB) was working closely with

City and Guilds on joint projects. The moves are intended to meet concerns that the rising A-level pass rate means exams are less demanding and that the proliferation of awarding bodies means schools can pick easier papers.

Heather James, assistant chief executive of the NEAB, said that further enforced mergers would be "a step too far". She said there were once 20 boards for the former CSE examination, which had dwindled

to a handful today. "We have already announced an agreement with City and Guilds, so we have an arrangement for a unitary body," she said. "Mrs Shephard is thinking of reducing four academic boards by one at a time when syllabuses are being radically reduced. This is a great deal of disruption when our energies need to be devoted to working with schools and colleges developing a new A level."

Labour said it would consider a unified system. The Government's consultation said there were eight controls, but evidence that "examination standards have not been consistently applied and maintained across boards".

Ofsted's study said boards were thorough in maintaining their own standards, but rarely compared them to other boards. "Some options allowed candidates to achieve the same marks by demonstrating quite different types of skills and understanding. This represented an unsatisfactory level of variability within the syllabuses."

Home ownership slows as tenants move with the times

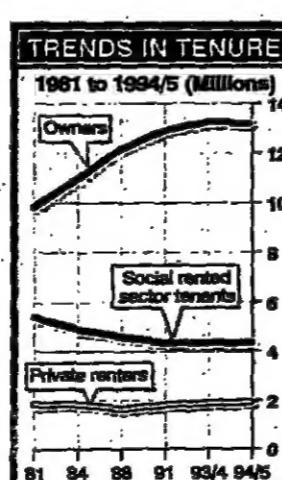
BY IAN MURRAY
COMMUNITY CORRESPONDENT

JOB insecurity is reversing the trend towards home ownership, it is reported today. An increasing number of former owners have been trying to find housing from councils or housing associations because their mortgage was no longer affordable or desirable.

The report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that more people are moving out of their own homes into cheap, rented accommodation than are leaving council flats to buy property.

When the Conservative Party came to power in 1979 and started to sell off council houses, 52 per cent of all homes were owner-occupied. The figure reached 67 per cent in 1991 but the rate of increase has slowed so that the current figure is 68 per cent.

Roger Burrows, author of the report, believes the present level is about 5 per cent higher



than the economy can support. He said: "We are going to see more people able to keep up mortgage payments only for four or five years and then having to drop out because they are out of work for a few months."

After years of hard work, they are forced back into social

housing. There needs to be a whole change in the way mortgages are granted. They could be paid off over two generations. They could be flexible to allow people to pay more when in work and less when they lose their job. There could be flexible tenure with homes part-owned and part-rented."

Two thirds of the 34,000 households moving from subsidised housing into a home of their own in 1994 had two or more working members. A steadily decreasing number of people with dependent children buy their own home. Mr Burrows said that lack of job security also meant that people had to move more often to find work, so that buying a house was less practical.

Contemporary Patterns of Residential Mobility in Relation to Social Housing in England, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 40 Water End, York YO3 6LP, £10

Courtroom whip-round pays rent

BARRISTERS held a whip-round in court after hearing that a mother and her two children would be evicted from their council home unless rent arrears were paid. Tracey Stevenson, 23, owed £60.80 to Bradford council, which was seeking a repossession order, the late of Man High Court in Douglas was told.

"They are definitely getting a big thank-you card," Ms Stevenson said yesterday when she learnt that the collection had raised £70.

She has lived with her children, David, 6, and Connor, 2, near Douglas since her marriage broke down. She had asked for a week to pay the £60.80 but Peter Saunders, for the council, demanded an immediate possession order. At that Ian Brown, a barrister who was sitting in court, offered to pay the sum himself and organised a collection.

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Steamy novels in readers' bad books

FROM QUENTIN LETTS
IN NEW YORK

REDUCED advances and slipping sales have led New York publishers to concede that one of the most vigorous fiction genres of recent decades, the "sex 'n' shopping" novel ("bonkbuster" in British parlance), is over.

Leading exponents such as Jackie Collins, Judith Krantz and Barbara Taylor Bradford are no longer commanding the respect or financial reward that they did a couple of years ago. Judith Regan, one of the best-regarded publishers in Manhattan, announced: "The shopping-and-sex novel is dead."

Advances have been more than halved and to widespread surprise the latest Jackie Collins title, *Vendetta*, failed to enter the bestseller charts at number one (as most of its predecessors did). Instead, it limped in at number 12.

Publishers who once would fit bonkbuster novelties with flowers, grand lunches and limousine lip-service now find that their diaries are too full. Numerous "glamour" authors, as they prefer to be called, have changed publishing houses recently, with an increasing number heading for smaller, speciality firms that are more prepared to make an effort on marketing.

Doris Mortman, the author of such fragrant epics as *First Born*, *Circles* and *Wild Rose*, had a relative dud with her last book, *True Colours*. In past years she received seven-figure advances, but for her next effort she will be receiving a fraction of that from an independent publisher.

The passing of the genre will rob publishing of some of its jolliest excesses. With it will pass the age of the mist-fringed author publicity snapshot, a miracle of photography which turned plump, beady-eyed divortees into big-haired, scarlet-lipped beauties.

"People are more interested now in legal thrillers — perhaps because they reflect more accurately the legal problems which can arise in modern life," said John Baker, of *Publishers Weekly*, a prominent trade paper. The bestseller lists now, "resound to names such as Patricia Cornwell, John Grisham, Michael Crichton and Scott Turow."

Lou Aronica, the head of Avon Books, said yesterday: "People are no longer interested in reading about conspicuous consumption and sex without love. They want more soulful stuff, deeper emotions."



The *Discovery* space shuttle blasts into orbit yesterday from Cape Canaveral, Florida, on a ten-day mission to service the Hubble space telescope. The seven-man crew will rendezvous with the Hubble, 360 miles above the Earth, early today to modernise some of the telescope's instruments

Russia 'needs policy of first-use nuclear strike'

BY ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW AND MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

PRESIDENT Yeltsin's chief security adviser said yesterday that Russia should be prepared to use nuclear weapons if it faced a conventional attack.

The Foreign Ministry intervened to point out that the remarks by Ivan Rybkin, Secretary of the Security Council, were "purely hypothetical".

However, his warning in an interview with the government newspaper, *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, has come at a time when Moscow is stepping up opposition to Nato's enlargement plans. Mr Rybkin referred to a pledge by Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet President, not to resort to nuclear weapons first in any conflict.

Mr Rybkin said that promise had been made without any consultation and, against the spirit of decades of conventional arms.

Nato wanted the right to



Rybkin: "We would use all available means"

means, with the options including nuclear arms."

A "no first use" policy was initially adopted by President Brezhnev in 1982. Nato never followed suit because of Russia's superiority in conventional arms. Nato wanted the right to

resort to a limited nuclear

strike in the event of being

overwhelmed by conventional forces.

That was a key element of Nato policy during the Cold War. Although Mr Gorbachev

reasserted the "no first use" policy, Nato still decided

against a similar strategy. The Russian position was overturned in 1993 with the publication of Russia's new military doctrine. This stated that Russia would not use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear state which had signed the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But it reserved the right to use nuclear weapons against a state which either had an agreement with a nuclear power or joined forces with a nuclear nation in mounting a conventional attack on Russia.

Mr Rybkin appeared to go one step further yesterday by suggesting that Moscow should be ready to resort to nuclear weapons against any conventionally armed aggressor. He said there was a danger that Russia's military decline since Soviet times could provide a temptation to "military adventurism".

"Naturally, we are not talking about a pre-emptive nuclear strike, but if an aggressor starts a conflict against us with conventional weapons, we may resort to nuclear weapons to provide a decisive response," he said.

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"Naturally, we are not talking about a pre-emptive nuclear strike, but if an aggressor starts a conflict against us with conventional weapons, we may resort to nuclear weapons to provide a decisive response," he said.

Mr Rybkin's remarks represented the most controversial intervention he has made since taking over as Mr Yeltsin's chief security adviser from Aleksandr Lebed last summer. His stewardship of the Security Council until now has been characterised by diplomacy and caution.

Mr Rybkin said he had "big doubts" about previous statements that Russia would not be the first side to use nuclear weapons in a conflict. With Russia's conventional forces in a chaotic state, the nuclear arsenal had become even more important.

Despite Moscow's stand against Nato expansion, Interfax news agency quoted a senior government source as saying: "We have stated more than once that we do not view any country or group of countries as an enemy. This refers to Nato as well."

Sergei Yastrzhembsky, the Kremlin spokesman, said that statements on the "strategic position" could be made only by the President, Prime Minister or Foreign Minister.

Letters, page 19

Wolves safe to prosper in free market turmoil

BY RICHARD BURSTON
IN MOSCOW

THE wolf, for centuries the most feared predator in rural Russia, is taking advantage of the country's current state of chaos to stage an impressive and menacing comeback.

In a move which has worried farmers

and environmentalists, not to mention little children, the Russian wolf is enjoying a renaissance from the Baltic states to the Pacific seaboard and has even returned to the heavily populated regions of central Russia, where its numbers have swelled to 40,000.

During the Soviet period, the wolf population was culled every year in a

government-funded programme, but in the past six turbulent years of economic and political turbulence funding has dried up and the wolves have seized the initiative. In remote regions, packs of wolves are seriously depleting other wildlife, particularly deer and wild boar. The beasts are also increasingly targeting livestock and domestic animals.

Security tightened in Chinese riot city

FROM JAMES PRINGLE
IN BEIJING

A SECURITY crackdown was imposed yesterday in the northwestern Chinese city of Yining, where protests last week by Muslim separatists led to a dozen deaths and 100 injuries, residents said.

The authorities sealed off the city, about 30 miles from the border of Kazakhstan, and soldiers and police officers patrolled the streets. Officials tried to play down the riot last week, in which one policeman was killed, saying that it was a small incident fuelled by foreign, hostile forces.

Residents said several arrests were made and police were searching for other "separatists" who may have been involved.

Xinjiang autonomous region, where Yining is situated, is — like Tibet — an area of strategic importance for China, bordering several newly-independent former Soviet states. It is home to the Lop Nor atomic weapons centre and has potentially vast oil reserves in the Tarim Basin.

When the People's Liberation Army marched into Xinjiang in 1950, only 3 or 4 per cent of the population were ethnic Han Chinese. Millions of settlers poured into the area, and their representation is now 36 per cent, while 48 per cent are Uighur, Turkic-speaking Muslim people.

Diplomats said that after the recent unrest they expected increased repression in Xinjiang, which is closed to correspondents resident in Beijing.

Letters, page 19



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The snow goose, an example of conservation gone wrong

Cries for a cull as snow goose numbers soar to 'near plague'

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

SCIENTISTS and conservationists in North America say hunters should be unleashed on the snow goose, at risk only three decades ago but now a threat to the environment and other wildlife.

The numbers nesting in

summer on the banks of Hudson Bay in Canada has tripled to three million since the 1960s, when sanctuaries were first set aside for the geese as they migrated northwards. That, and changing farming methods in their winter nesting areas, has created a near plague.

Broad tracts of Canadian tundra have been devastated by the geese, which use their powerful beaks to rip away vegetation. Goslings, although unable to fly, have reportedly walked some 40 miles inland from Hudson Bay in search of food.

Other birdlife has suffered, too, and at a meeting in Houston, Texas, next week, ornithologists are expected to call for a cull. Bruce Batt, a leading conservationist and chief biologist for the waterfowl organisation Ducks Unlimited, has recommended

that hunters be allowed to shoot greater numbers of the birds.

In the 1970s no-hunting zones were established and the winter-feeding habitats for the geese in America's warm south were transformed into agricultural lands, providing greater food supplies for the birds.

Then a comparatively

warm period in Canada in the early 1980s increased reproduction rates.

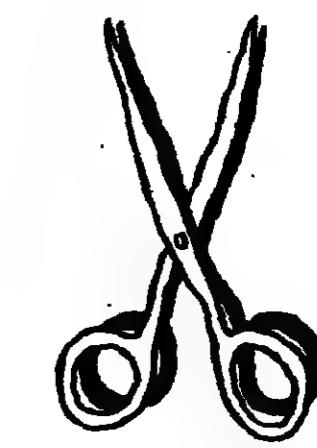
Mr Batt told *The New York*

Times that the geese were "on a collision course" with nature, threatening the ecosystem.

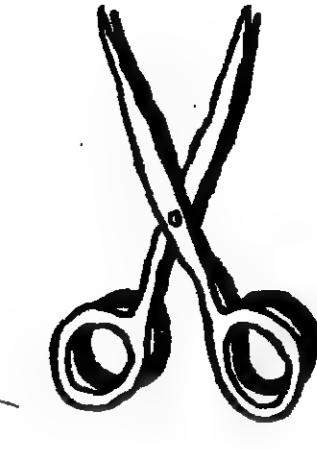
Robert Rockwell of New York's City University, said large areas of tundra were becoming a "spreading slum".

The story is a classic of benevolent conservation gone wrong. Experts are expected to agree next week that snow goose numbers should be halved by 2005, while not wasting "these marvellous birds".

Generally less fatty than the normal restaurant bird, the snow goose has a stronger flavour. It roasts well and makes a pleasing fritto.



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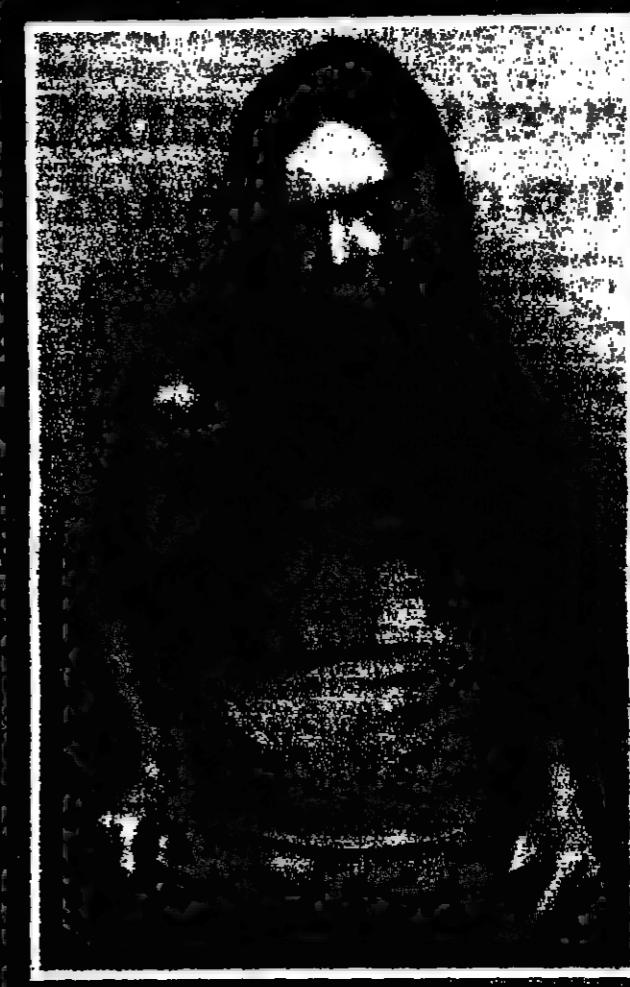
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The cold shoulder



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Amanda Wakeley

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The sensual art of shopping for clothes

Of all the murky areas in the cloud of unknowing that hovers between men and women, artfully rendering the sexes largely incomprehensible to each other, one of the murkiest is that of shopping.

Men, or more precisely Englishmen, do not understand the first thing about shopping. They are bad on all aspects of this activity if you do not believe me, try the following experiment: send the nearest man to the nearest supermarket with a short list of essential items - washing powder, free-range eggs - printed in big black felt-tip letters on lined paper. He will return laden with six carrier bags containing horrid melons and Comteau and wasabi paste and amaretti biscuits and absolutely no washing powder at all, and will then pronounce at length on the dullness of the list and the lack of imaginative flair of women when it comes to groceries.

But if you really want to lob a bomb into your domestic routine, the best way to do it is to announce, quite quietly, that you fancy a little spot of window-shopping.

It is well documented already that the only shop an Englishman ever voluntarily enters is the ironmongers. Shopping for their own clothes

men regard as a painful duty, to be undertaken only as a last resort. The kind of shopping that women go in for - looking in more than one place, sometimes for hours at a time, quite often without

clothes shopping - that it has no connection with the brushtuft of a need for warmth or decency, but is nothing less than an act of seduction. To set out in search of a new dress is like the beginning of a love affair. The moment of capture is all very well, but the pleasure, the skill, the real excitement of the whole thing lie

in the pursuit. What is taking place, in that descriptively aimless process of drifting from MaxMara to Chanel to Donna Karan, trying on in each place an apparently identical cream wool shift dress, is a small ritual of fantasy and

desire - Retail Foreplay, you might call it. The rails of clothes shops are stocked with other stories, other lives, any of which (or so it seems, when one is in a mood to shop) can be yours for the plucking of a garment from a hanger. The frock that gets to go home with you is quite simply, the one

that tells you what you most want to hear about yourself at that moment.

And should you find, the morning after, that you've made a ghastly mistake,

you've got the perfect excuse for taking it back and beginning the whole delicious process all over again.

**JANE SHILLING
GETS DRESSED**

buying a single thing at the end of it all - most Englishmen regard as not just morally suspect, but actually mad.

On the Continent, of course,

they do things differently.

There, the chaps understand

the fundamental truth about

mainly in the pursuit. What is taking place, in that descriptively aimless process of drifting from MaxMara to Chanel to Donna Karan, trying on in each place an apparently identical cream wool shift dress, is a small ritual of fantasy and

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We are witnessing the death of the chef

NIGELLA LAWSON
forecasts an
increasingly grim
culinary future for
Britain after a visit
to the food
industry's own
exhibition
at Earls Court

We all know the story, we've been spun the lines: Britain has undergone the most miraculous culinary renaissance. First came the superchef, hairdresser of the Eighties; now food is the new rock'n'roll and the home-grown article the gastronomic answer to Britpop. More: we no longer have to bow to the French, because culturally we have come of age — we don't need anyone to tell us how to cook eggs, or cook them.

Would that you could take yourself to IFE '97, the tenth International Food and Drink Exhibition at Earls Court, where the scene is rather different. But of course, you can't: the show is for the industry only, and that's the point. The Good Food Show at the beginning of March will tell you what you want to hear; the IFE, tells it how it is.

IFE is about food as engineering and marketing: the marketing men's packaging shows wholesome raw ingredients scattered on scrubbed kitchen tables. Agas in the background, while the engineers' videos boast of the biggest factories with the longest cook 'n' freeze production lines.

I'm not saying that things haven't improved. As I have eaten, shopped and dined out professionally for more than a decade, it would be odd not to have noticed that. And certainly, from grim stories told of what it was like in the days when you had to go to Soho — or, Timothy White's — for a bottle of olive oil, I accept we're lucky to live in more gastronomically enlightened times.

But even with my scepticism about the putative improvements in the British culinary scene, I was shocked by the subtext of IFE '97. With some notable exceptions, on the whole what this exhibition demonstrated was this: forget the sanctification of passage, what we are really witnessing in this country is the death of the chef.

Exhibitor after exhibitor is in the business of knocking up finished dishes in a factory, to be carried off frozen to pubs and restaurants across the country, where they will be presented as if fresh from the kitchen at the back.

It's not that anyone is actually telling lies; it's just that nobody at IFE seems to think there is much to cover up. Whenever I asked whether the food I was seeing was intended to be sold in the catering industry for it to pass off as its own, no one quite grasped what I was getting at.

It is so accepted that this is common practice that they were genuinely surprised, nonplussed even, by my query: that, after all, is what the food business is about. What else did I think was happening?

Astonishingly, they are doing it in France, too. Bakers are no longer making their own croissants and brioches and pains au chocolat: they're buying them ready-made and frozen and mostly from a company called Coup de Pates which is currently touring for business here. If you go to Paris, their man at the fair told me, you've got a one-in-three chance of eating one of his croissants in the morning.

At least, though, these croissants are properly made, using luscious butter; they taste like croissants; they are croissants. What astonished the Coup de Pates man was that no British corporate buyer seemed to be at all interested in the fine culinary differences between his 11 styles of croissant.

We're talking commodities here, budget-led, and perhaps it is naive of me to be shocked by all those stallholders who

It's all talk
of end-
user, and
nobody
mentions
cooking

Tasting the future and not licking it — Nigella Lawson at the International Food and Drink Exhibition

talked of "product" and "end-user" with no mention of food, of taste, of cooking, for goodness sake.

One company representative told me that chicken portions were an advance on chickens because a whole chicken "had to be managed" and that now chefs prepared "meal occasions". Portioned birds meant no wastage. Come again? A kitchen without leftovers is a kitchen without a soul as far as I'm concerned.

That's the real waste. A representative from another company told me that "chefs want their point of difference" and so his company will provide this, a little bit of mushroom there or carrot here, just to make it seem as if the chef himself had been finessing his own recipe.

I accept, as the Editor of *Food Industry News*, told me, that what this all means is that the food in the average place is better, more consistent, than if

incompetent, uncaring kitchen staff were throwing things together themselves — but is this what we're coming to? We are none of the restaurants Jonathan Meades reviews may go in for these practices, but they do in other restaurants, for want of a better word. And it is in these that most people in the country eat. It signifies.

Actually, at the upper end of the market there is a deal of fudging, too. Recently I bought a jar of strawberry jam from a local deli. It appeared to be made by, or at least for, the deli: the label and frilly paper lid-cover bore its name. A few weeks later I came across the same range of jams in another deli. Again, the jar was, as I have

been told, from this trade fair, personalised.

Now, these jams are excellent and I saw them all at the Foster's Traditional Foods stall at Earls Court, along with the "traditional judge" and chutneys, and so forth, sold in upmarket emporia throughout the country as if they came expressly from the outlet itself. The quality is high, so why complain? And I don't, but I somehow balk at the phoniness.

I asked, Alec Cousins, of Joubert, whether any top chefs bought his stock (which again wouldn't be in itself a bad thing: it is properly made, real stock which I am happy to buy). He said that it would never work if he approached the chef directly as no chef would own up to buying in, "but as you know, there is an ever-increasing number of microwave operators".

The way it is done, apparently, is via a food distributor whom the chef trusts enough already not to blow his gaff.

But it gets worse: what I didn't know is that local authorities are buying in ready-cooked food, too. You thought we all cared about health and culinary education these days? Well, what the nation's children are in fact getting at school are bought-in, breaded chicken tenders and something called Green Goo, which is an ovoid pastry envelope filled with green, banana-flavoured gunk. I'm sure the children love this, but how do you feel about it? Did you even know about it?

So much for our culinary advances. Please come back the much-maligned dinner lady: all is most definitely forgiven.

The right view about marriage?

TAX BREAKS would be a cynical
incentive to stay married

APPARENTLY this is National Marriage Week and in celebration Demos, the think-tank, has issued a report analysing the current state of the institution and suggesting that something could be done to underpin it. Is anyone disagreeing? Now that both Left and Right have decided marriage is A Good Thing, we have a strange consensus.

In common political parlance, the Left is understood to have stolen the Right's

clothing on this one. But actually, it is the behaviour of the libertarian Right which seems the most out of character. After all, it is this wing that decries, on most matters, any government intervention, stresses the need for personal liberty and lack of coercion from the State and is constant

ly reminding us to take full responsibility for ourselves and to look to no one else for blame or sustenance.

And yet the Right is constantly showing its piety that Government, that band of PC pinheads, is doing nothing to reward marriage fiscally — thus providing no incentive to get married — and doing less to punish those

who wish to free themselves from the ties that bind, thus providing no incentive to stay married. But surely, once divorce is legal, it is inappro-

priate to talk of making it harder for people to dissolve their marriage, however much we know this might harm the children.

Divorcees are not criminals and it is not therefore for the Government to devise ways of punishing them. One would expect those frisky, freedom-loving libertarians to take the view that if people once legal constraints are off, choose to behave badly or selfishly, it is theirs, not the Government's, fault.

If the Right really does think tax breaks are the way to keep marriages together, this surely doesn't reveal a sense of civic order, but the most amazing cynicism.

The end of the
freebie? Jason
Nissé reports:
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Artemis Cooper recalls the birth of the New Look Fashion's greatest day

This had better be "good," grumbled Carmel Snow, the Editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, on February 12, 1947. She had arrived in the Avenue Montaigne in freezing weather, with few taxis available in petrol-rationed Paris, for the start of Christian Dior's first collection. At that moment, neither she nor anyone in the room could have imagined the mixture of wild enthusiasm and political outrage about to be unleashed.

No attempt had been made to drum up publicity; but among the professionals in the fashion world, Dior was already known as a designer of great talent. By 10.30am, the crush was so great that some people were trying to get in through the top windows with ladders. Dior, a plump, shy little man with a pink face and a receding chin, was in an agony of nerves.

The show began. The appearance of each new dress was greeted with gasps and thunderous applause. "The models were very tall, with tiny waists," remembered one eyewitness. "They walked with a relentless arrogance and swish, swish went those wonderfully constructed skirts only a few inches above the ankle. As I watched these marvelous clothes going up and down the catwalk, I realised that from that moment, everything in my wardrobe was completely démodé." At the end of the show, when a dazed Monsieur Dior emerged from his office, he was greeted with an ecstatic standing ovation.

The clothes looked simple, but to support those huge skirts and keep the waists tight, each dress was a miracle of lining, padding, boning and lacing. Carmel Snow is famous for having said: "Monsieur Dior, your clothes have such a new look." Yet while the look was new, Dior had gone against the main thrust of 20th-century fashion, which has been towards ease and comfort.

Nevertheless, women found themselves lusting after these uncompromisingly feminine clothes. An

American who visited the Dior fitting rooms soon after the show described the scene as "more dangerous than entering a den of female lions at feeding time. The richest ladies in Europe were screaming for the dresses."

Outside the fitting rooms, Dior's fashions were not so well received. Nancy Mitford, who lost no time in buying herself a Dior suit, wrote that "people shout out at you from vans, because for some reason it creates class feeling in a way no sables could".

Life was still very hard for

ic shoots was organised. One of these was the outdoor market in the rue Lepic, in working-class Montmartre. The clothes were sent there by truck and the models changed into them in the back room of a bar. When the first model sauntered proudly into the rue Lepic, the effect was electric. For moment there was silence. Then came insults, hoots of derision, and within seconds the model was surrounded by a group of shrieking women who were beating her up, tearing her hair and ripping the dress off her back.

ROBERT CAPA/MAGNUM



The look of a new world: from Dior's 1947 collection

most people in Paris. Wages were low and prices very high, goods were in short supply, yet almost anything could be bought if you had the money to pay le prix fort.

In 1947, a dress is just a dress, be it cheap or expensive. Yet to the average Parisian looking at a Dior creation in 1947, those yards and yards of wool or silk represented so much fuel, so much bread and meat, so many children's shoes.

Nevertheless, women found themselves lusting after these uncompromisingly feminine clothes. An

In England, Sir Stafford Cripps branded the New Look "unpatriotic". On arrival in America, the couturier was greeted by a delegation of women waving a banner reading "Mr Dior — We Abhor — Dresses to the floor".

Carmel Snow's remark, "This had better be good", was a challenge. Dior had met it with a collection so sensational that it had people not only talking, but shouting as well.

Artemis Cooper is, with Anthony Beevor, the author of *Paris After the Liberation, 1944-49*, published by Penguin.

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Alan Coren



■ Is there anything anywhere that is not out to peck us?

Such as I hate the thought of any of my dear readers, even before this paragraph has brumpled to its close, crying "Right, that's it then" and turning irritably to the crossword, I no less hate the thought of wasting their precious time. I therefore feel caring-bound to say that if you are someone who thinks that there is quite enough to worry about as it is, today's cobbling is not for you. Racked as you already are by agonies over monetary union, ozone holes, NHS underfunding, mislead Ukrainian warheads, environmental pollution, prison policy, collision-course asteroids, Chinese ambitions, greenbelt despoliation, royal yachts, mad cows, blazing Chunnel, millennial profugy, Interneted smut, nursery vouchers, drug abuse, privacy invasion, and the 89 diseases from which you began suffering the instant Dr Sutcliffe finished describing their symptoms, I urge you to seek a safer haven than this. You do not want to hear what follows.

At a little before noon yesterday, having spent several hours in the attic groping for syllables, I threw open the window to expel the thick blue smoke of an emptied pack — neighbours of the disposition of those readers now no longer with us will immediately have slammed theirs shut in terror — and went downstairs to make a sandwich. It was a good sandwich, fresh crusty wholemeal bread, thickly buttered, embracing several slices of best Scotch smoked salmon, and about to be made even better by the large glass of Mersault now being brought upstairs with it. Since, however, it could be made better yet by the wedge of lemon I had forgotten to bring, I put the plate on my desk, and ran downstairs again.

When I returned to the attic, it was immediately borne in upon me that the sandwich might, in my absence, have become not quite as good as it had been when I left. That is because there was a pigeon standing on it. It did not stand there long, choosing instead to take off again through the accessing window at a speed and trajectory which would have left its clay cousin at the post, but what I did not know was how long it had been standing on my sandwich before I had come back. I had been away for perhaps a minute, and while it was possible that the pigeon had flown in and landed only a second before I returned, it was equally possible that it had been there for the full 60. It might, in short, have had the time not just to stand on the sandwich, but to walk about on it. Or round it, pecking as it went. It was important for me to know these things, for while I am not — unlike the dear readers no longer with us — a person to worry unduly about the risk of a pigeon's footstep, the thought that the bird's beak might have had a go at my lunch, drilling into it with a beak recently used for dismembering worms, was a different matter.

I examined the sandwich for beak-holes. I even took a magnifying-glass to it. However, since wholemeal bread has, as you know, an open weave, in order to determine whether the dozens of little holes in it were made by a pigeon or merely by a baker, you would have to know the diameter of a pigeon's beak. Odd, how a man can get to my age and not know something like that. The only option was to lift the bread and see whether there was a hole in the salmon. There was not. But, as I closed the sandwich again, raised it, and prepared to bite into it, I suddenly wondered whether I might have been unwisely blasé about the footstep.

I put the sandwich down again, and rang the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It would have been more logical, of course, to ring the Royal Society for the Protection of Humans, but it wasn't listed. Was there, I inquired, any disease that a man could catch off a pigeon?

You know the answer. Would I have warned off all those dear readers, otherwise? The answer is that there is almost no disease that a man cannot catch off a pigeon, there is pigeon-fanciers lung, there is pigeon-nite dermatitis, there is ornithosis, chlamydia, iritis, salmonella ...

I threw the sandwich in the bin, thinking: is there anything which is not out to get us, given half a chance? If it ever emerges that crosswords cause brain damage, the responsibility could kill me.



Dorrell's dumb question

A British politician is never so ludicrous as when chanting the "West Lothian question". The question is a monster. It threatens John Major's United Kingdom. Asking it brings a tremble to the lips of his short-lived constitutional spokesman, Stephen Dorrell. The Scottish Secretary, Michael Forsyth, sees the question as a Presbyterian menace to all that is most holy and most Tory. Nor can Labour meet its awesome logic. The West Lothian question is like squaring the circle and hunting the Snark. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

Funny that the Americans cracked it in 1776. Funny that Spanish and Italian politicians do not toss and turn all night over it. Funny that constitution pundits from Canada to Cape Town, from Switzerland to Delhi, have found the answer. Only in Britain is the world still flat and resting on turtles.

The question is as follows. How can it be fair for a Scottish MP to rule England from Westminster when an English MP cannot rule Scotland from a proposed Scottish parliament in Edinburgh? The question seems to blow every intellectual fuse. It reduces Mr Forsyth to the pose of Rodin's *Thinker*. Nor may lessons be drawn from abroad. A foreign answer to the West Lothian question cannot apply.

So let us stay at home. In Belfast last week I witnessed at work what Mr Major proclaims he most fears: a "devolved democratic assembly with tax-raising powers". It is Belfast City Council. Its tax-raising discretion — to levy a 5p in the pound property tax for tourism, arts and economic development — was granted by Mr Major himself in 1992. Similar councils in England, Wales and Scotland are rate-capped and enjoy no such powers. Northern Ireland is unique.

This modest discretion has not led to the "break-up" of Ulster, but to the opposite, an impressive local instance of power-sharing. Sinn Fein and the DUP sit round the table with the established nationalist and Unionist parties to run an as-yet limited range of activities. The practice is being repeated in a dozen other local councils across the Province. Yet Mr Major dare not boast, since it drives a coach and horses through his opposition to such powers for cities outside.

This fiscal devolution is not all. Up the road at Stormont Castle, Mr Major's team is hard at work trying to persuade Northern Ireland's senior politicians to

accept a devolved regional assembly. Ever since 1985, London has been baying, bribing and threatening them to accept a version of the old Stormont. Many Ulster people rightly fear that such an assembly would be unstable. It would exacerbate group tension and might indeed threaten the Union, as it did in the 1970s. The British Cabinet seems careless of this risk. Yet precisely such an institution, located in Edinburgh, would apparently "lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom". The Scots say overwhelmingly in polls that they want a "Stormont". Mr Major calls it an enigma.

Now turn to the equally gripping question of tax-raising powers for a Scottish assembly. Mr Forsyth rightly points out that Labour wants the assembly to vary income tax by up to one penny in the pound. He rightly gives warning that the huge subsidies going to Scotland at present might cease under devolution. He also says that Scotland might lose its present surplus of MPs, some 20 more than its fair share, awarded long ago to appease its rural population and absence of home rule.

To me these are all powerful arguments for devolution, not against. Let Scotland pay for its own public services. Devolved government can be costly, inconvenient, whimsical and bureaucratic. Democracy often is. Brussels thinks the same of Mr Major's tax-raising assembly at Westminster. What is indefensible is for Mr Forsyth to set out his little shop of horrors but deny customers the right to buy from it. He offers the Scots no assembly, no referendum, no choice, no vote. Like Mr Dorrell he treats them as dumb.

We might recall that John Major enjoyed tax-raising powers as a local councillor in uncapped Lambeth in the 1970s. The great cities of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland built their public services on tax-raising powers, without threatening the Union. Tax-raising powers are possessed even by parish councils in England, to the tune of a penny rate. Scotland is a country the size of Denmark, more populous than New Zealand, yet the Cabinet dare not grant it the liberties of an English parish or an

Simon Jenkins

Ulster city, let alone of Glasgow in 1900. Five million Scots cannot be trusted with an institution offered to two million Irish. This is not a Cabinet proving its political muscle. It is hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is reinforced by a Big Lie. Mr Major, Mr Forsyth and Mr Dorrell constantly imply that devolved powers lead to higher local taxes. They offer no evidence, because such evidence as we have points the other way. Virtually no parish in England levies its full penny rate. Before counties and boroughs were capped by the Treasury, even up to the moment of capping in 1987, their overall tax-and-spending rose more slowly than that of central government. Some Ulster cities were out of line, but the average was slower. Today in uncapped Northern Ireland, the portion of property taxes levied by the Northern Ireland Office has risen faster than the parishes levied by district councils. Central spending, not local spending, is the profiteer.

The reason is simple. Taxing and spending decisions taken closest to the electorate tend to be most accountable. This is why big government is always more extravagant. The original poll tax was intended to honour this perception, but Margaret Thatcher did not have the courage of the conviction. She capped it. So did Mr Major when he brought in the council tax. Neither succeeded in capping their own spending. All central spending, not local spending, is the profiteer.

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The Big Lie of local extravagance is now being used to deny England, Scotland and Wales a democratic licence enjoyed by local and regional electors across all of Europe and North America. Within the United Kingdom the licence is on offer only in Northern Ireland. The reason, says Mr Dorrell, is that Northern Ireland is "different". What does he mean? I think we know. He means that the United Kingdom is like Spain confronting the Basques or France the Corsicans. Devolved democracy will be conceded by a British government only where separatists bomb and murder their way into the headlines. That is what I call a "threat to the Union". It is totally cynical.

As for the answer to the West Lothian

question, go ask the rest of the world. Go ask Ulster. When Stormont existed, Northern Ireland was entitled to half as many MPs as was the rest of the United Kingdom. That is the answer. Some history Ulster remembers, some it forgets.

Are you one of Mr Blair's?

Sue Cameron on Labour's plans for the Whitehall force

Labour's plans for revamping the Whitehall machine if it wins the election are reaching a crucial stage. Now, with only weeks to go before polling day, Shadow Cabinet members are jockeying for position, and Britain's top civil servants are anxious for every puff of smoke that emerges from Blair's inner circle.

Tony Blair and those close to him are considering which of our most influential public servants should be promoted to the pinnacle of power if Labour comes to office. They are also looking at ways of reorganising some departmental fiefdoms as a way of exerting control over Whitehall and the Cabinet. Mr Blair will apply the Thatcherite "one of us" principle to Cabinet ministers — so rigorously that some civil servants will face the unnerving prospect of new ministers coming into office with a sense of political death hanging over them.

But changes to the government machine could be used to enforce discipline on freethinking or overweening ministers and to revivify the Civil Service. They would also help to solve the lingering problem of what to do with Labour's deputy leader, John Prescott.

The one man who seems certain to keep his job under a Labour government is Sir Robin Butler, the Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service — though only for the six months before he is due to retire.

Richard Mottram, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, was previously thought to be one of the frontrunners to become Cabinet Secretary, but senior Labour people now apparently feel that he may be too closely associated with Michael Heseltine, to whom he was private secretary during the Westland affair. He helped to draft Mr Heseltine's resignation speech in 1986.

Andrew Turnbull, the Permanent Secretary at the Department of the Environment, and Sir Richard Wilson, the top civil servant at the Home Office, are both still in the frame to succeed Sir Robin, but they may face stiff competition from Sir John Kerr, Sir John, Britain's Ambassador to Washington, is returning to London to become Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office, but some in the Labour Party would like to see him rise even higher. Labour has long been expected to separate the jobs of Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service. What is only now emerging is that Labour would like to combine the job of head of the Civil Service with that of Permanent Secretary at the Office of Public Service. The aim would be twofold: to enlist the aid of the Civil Service in managing change in the public services, and to avoid creating a powerful Civil Service Department of the kind that Margaret Thatcher eventually abolished because it was too independent.

The manoeuvrings in the Shadow Cabinet itself may also be harbingers for Whitehall. John Prescott is busily trying to negotiate a job for himself against the day of victory. Meanwhile, the Shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown, is known to have aspired to "superministry" status for the Treasury, so that he might oversee long-term economic and social renewal plans elsewhere in Whitehall.

However, enforcing central control on Whitehall by means of "superministries" seems to be losing ground, with some Labour insiders giving warning that this would be a recipe for jealousy and territorial war. More acceptable would be a policy of slicing up big departments into smaller, more manageable ones. This would mean more permanent secretariats for top civil servants. It would also help Mr Blair to put his mark not just on Whitehall, but on his Cabinet.

He would have little room for manoeuvre in appointing his first Cabinet, because party rules insist that the Shadow Cabinet, elected by Labour MPs, must be kept on after an election victory. But once ensconced in No 10, a Labour Prime Minister is free to shuffle his Cabinet as he pleases, after the first few months. Refashioning departments and ministerial rankings would give opportunities to exercise short-term control.

Finding a role for Mr Prescott will be the worst headache. He expects to be Deputy Prime Minister if Labour wins, but he is also insisting on a departmental job to give him an anchor in Whitehall. He would like a big economic department, but the idea is not popular with Messrs Blair and Brown. Splitting education from employment would be one solution. Giving Mr Prescott the employment side and some responsibility for regional policy would allow him some clout, but not too much. Education is to be the centrepiece of a Blair government, so it would not lose status if separated from employment.

A significant change is also likely at Environment, which is second only to Social Security in Whitehall's spending leviathan. Mr Blair and Mr Brown may not relish the thought of any single minister being in charge of so much of the budget. One answer might be to split the department into its components of housing, local government and green issues. Green matters could perhaps be put together with Transport — which is a rump department after so much privatisation.

Labour has not set any of its plans in concrete, and may yet be denied the chance to rearrange Whitehall at all. But if it does, senior civil servants may find themselves with a government machine far more centralised than ever before.

Snap election

AT THE launch of his Referendum Party candidacy in Folkestone and Hythe, John Aspinall, the casino owner and close friend of Jimmy Goldsmith, made a foolhardy decision to show off a fishing cat called Loei from his Port Lympne Zoo.

Aspinall expounded his plan to defeat Michael Howard, the Home Secretary and sitting MP. Loei was tended by a keeper from the zoo, Neville Buck, who stroked it tenderly. Loei just purred.

But as soon as the journalists

started asking questions and photographers popped their flash-guns, the beast in Loei came to the fore. The cat started to crawl up the keeper's neck and sank its teeth into his nose.

Aspinall, 70, whose animals have in the past attacked their keepers rather too successfully, looked on smirking as the poor man cried out, tried to pull the cat off and then had to leave the room still tugging. Our Referendum Party candidate finished addressing his audience, and then, with

the sinister cool of the arch-gambler, told them that serious badness had been avoided.

• The Duchess of York's economy drive seems to know no bounds. On a recent flight from LA, passengers in the first-class cabin noted how she turned down the complimentary pyjamas. Instead, come bedtime, the duchess disappeared into the lavatory and reappeared wearing a tatty old skirt and a woolly gardening jumper. "She looked like a bag lady," recalls a fellow traveller.

Old loyalist

RED DAVE NELLIST was standing outside Labour HQ in London the other day trying to sell copies of the new newspaper from the re-launched Socialist Party, formerly Militant. He was being shown new Labour's sharp shoulder until a familiar figure rolled into view and became the first-ever buyer of the paper. It was none other than John Prescott, new Labour's old Labour deputy leader.

He fired the barrel-shaped Peter MacKay as Editor of *Punch*; yesterday he accepted the resignation of John Dux, chief executive of his Liberty Publishing empire.

There was no acrimony this time, insists Liberty's chairman Stewart Steven. But Dux and two other colleagues who left with him had no work to do. "He came here to build the publishing empire and purchase media properties," he said. "It has become clear that over the next six months the whole sector is drying up on us. It's a semi-setback, that's all."

Low stakes

THERE are rumblings at the Beefsteak Club, the high game and higher Tory adventure above the tourist tat shops around Leicester Square. Economic necessity means that members must now

pay for their wine by the glass. These members range from Sir Peregrine Worsthorne and Patrick Leigh-Fermor to Cabinet ministers such as Sir Patrick Mayhew and William Waldegrave.

In the past, members have paid a flat fee for food, and then drunk as much club claret as they might wish. Any change goes down badly in a place where they measure time by the number of hairs in members' nostrils. "Paying by the glass" means one regular. "It's like some cheap Italian restaurant."

"We needed to make a bit of a profit," explained the club steward, "so we had to make the change. It is not as if the members have been taking too much advantage of the drink on offer." Perish the thought.

Astounding

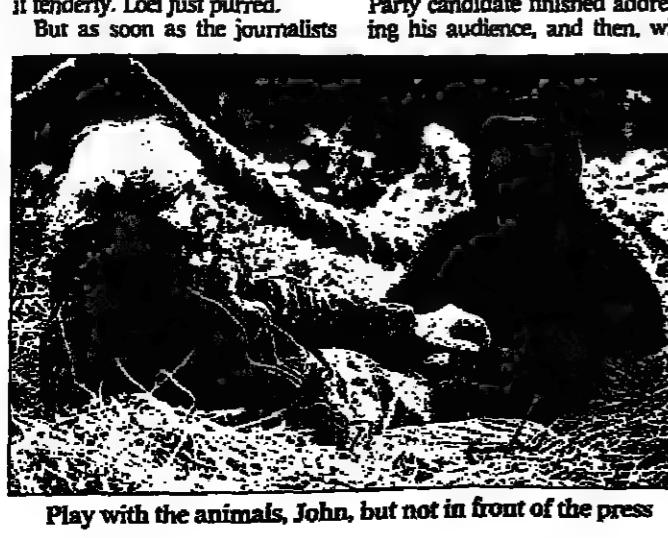
MOMENTS before the high-spirited of the Tory party reached for their wallets to bid ridiculous sums at the fundraising auction of the Tory Winter Ball on Monday, John Major provided his answer to a political conundrum.

Why does Gordon Brown's jaw open like a guppy fish and remain that way after every utterance? In his speech to the faithful, Major suggested that such a man could never be trusted with the economy.

"He is a man whose jaw drops at the end of every sentence," he said. "It does that because he can't believe what he is saying."

• The feminist publisher Virago, renowned for its meagre advances, has loosened its purse strings for an unknown 23-year-old, Neil Stroud, an Oxford graduate who ran away to join the circus, has received a £45,000 advance for an account of his travels entitled *Josser* — circus parlance for "outsider".

P.H.S



Are you
one of
Blair?
Sue Camm



DUMBING DOWN

Mrs Shephard's exam reform is a comprehensive failure

It is in their embrace of selection and their desire to extend it that the Conservatives show themselves unambiguously in advance of Labour in the pursuit of educational excellence. It is all the odder then, that the party which can tarnish Labour as the friend of the failed comprehensive system should seek to "comprehensive" examinations. Gillian Shephard's proposals yesterday will make an unhappy memorial for an under-achieving minister. For all her protestations that she is injecting "rigour" into the system, the Education Secretary is engaged in dumbing-down the A level.

Mrs Shephard is treading the same path paved with good intentions which led the late Lord Joseph astray. He was responsible for replacing one perfectly good exam, the O level, with an inferior, the GCSE. His aim was admirable, as admirable as the aspirations of the pioneers of comprehensive schools — to broaden access to achievement. The consequence of moving to GCSEs is proving, in practice, almost as unhappy as the flight from excellence signalled by the embrace of comprehensives. The GCSE does not stretch the able as the old O level did, and it is still unsuitable for the academically weak. One size does not fit all.

Having disposed of the O level the Tories now seem intent on undermining the A level. Splitting the sixth-form, with pupils attempting AS levels after one year, and then A levels in their second, is intended to swell numbers staying on. It will, inevitably, mean the entry point for AS levels will be less rigorous than it was for A levels.

It is particularly damaging for the able pupil. The first year will be spent doing work at a level less testing than before, and, instead of two years to accustom herself to suitable study as a preparation for higher education, there will be only one. It is not better for the weaker brethren. They will be receiving a certificate whose value will decrease as the ease with which it can be taken becomes apparent.

One of the most effective ways in which

Mrs Shephard could have shown herself a genuine friend of standards is by abolishing the "modular" A level. By allowing retakes and permitting academic hand-holding the modular exam is the antithesis of the "effort, earnestness and excellence" in education which Frances Lawrence called for and Gillian Shephard applauded. Since their introduction three years ago, the proportion of candidates taking modular A levels has risen steadily to 15 per cent and shows no sign of abatement. Mrs Shephard hopes to reverse the tide by reducing the number of resits per module to one and disallowing resits of the final module. This is policy retrograde from the Gorbachev of the educational establishment, tinkering with a mechanism that is irredeemably flawed.

Mrs Shephard might, at the very least, have reserved the modular approach for AS levels and kept the A level an appropriately stringent examination. If she has neither the time, nor will, to move away from modules altogether she should have ensured that the A level's quality was not strained.

Of the Government's other announcements yesterday, there is little cause for cheer. The plan to develop a Key Skills qualification to assure employers and universities that school-leavers can read, add up and switch on a computer is a sad indictment of the failure of the system overall. The demand for the qualification reflects the poor attainment in basic literacy and numeracy of too many school leavers.

Mr Major's own plan for a "National Target" is dangerously dirigiste. He should have known better than to associate himself with the aggrandising ambitions of the Department for Education and Employment in education, as in economics, the answer to underperformance is not national targets and the masking of failure with a redefinition downwards of success. Standards will only improve through competition and choice. Mr Major knows that it is a pity he chooses to hide behind his Education Secretary's skirts.

THE RIGHT TRACK

Privatisation has made the trains run on time

With the award yesterday of the franchise for Regional Railways Central, the Government has now completed the sale of the 25 train operating units formed from the breakup of British Rail. By the time of the election, the running of all trains on Britain's 11,000-mile network will be in private hands, and railway privatisation — the most complicated, protracted and contentious of all state sell-offs — will be complete.

The exercise has been a greater success than even the Government had hoped, and its advocates can take credit for keeping their nerve and vision. An avalanche of early criticism, blunders and bureaucratic ineptitude threatened a PR and operational disaster. But despite warnings of business indifference and a fracturing of the network, the franchising operation has attracted enthusiastic interest from well-qualified bidders, has resulted in a good mix of operators and has begun to yield the improvements that are changing public perception. Ofrair — the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising — has done a good job.

A new generation of entrepreneurs is delivering better, faster and cheaper journeys. Passenger numbers have risen 6 per cent in a year, complaints are down 30 per cent and a new mood of optimism is seeping through the industry. Punctuality has improved, as the performance regime, allocating blame for delay and imposing penalty charges, has sharpened the commercial instinct. Trains are cleaner, staff more committed and passengers able to enjoy the attention taken for granted in the air. The award of the biggest and most rundown franchise, the West Coast Main Line, to Richard Branson is particularly welcome.

HEY, BIG SPENDERS

Tory ball-goers dance to the step of supply and demand

It is traditional to hold an auction for party funds at the Conservatives' Winter Ball. But for a signed copy of a slightly used book to sell at £17,000 is not True, it was a book by the Prime Minister's wife about Chequers. True too, the entire cabinet had also placed their names upon the fly-leaf. But £17,000? For such a sum the purchaser could have had a first edition of Newton's *Principia* in five volumes, 1495-98, printed by the great Aldus himself in Venice.

The auction prices this year would have brought a smile to the face of a Sotheby's expert, even if he suspected he was being filmed at his expertise by a covert camera. A large painting entitled *The Fleet in Sight* by Stanhope Forbes fetched £300,000, a record for that artist and the price of a middling Renoir or Turner. Forbes was a fine and long-lived RA of the Newlyn school whose canvases are famously large and watery. This particular painting was unusual for focussing on the crowd looking out to sea rather than at the fleet. But £300,000.

If the Tory party loses the coming election it will not be for lack of enthusiasm at dinner and dance. The Prime Minister's preface to the programme encouraged bidders to take out their wallets and shake them with abandon. Its bull point was that "victory in the marginal seats is vital if we are to enter a fifth term of office". This may not summon

up the spirit as rousing as Henry V before Harfleur. But it certainly did the trick.

There was, of course, some help from Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, an auctioneer who needs no chandelier bids to sell his books. This salesman could sell underarm to the Venus de Milo. At the end of the auction he did indeed sell the two gavels with which he conducted it for £27,000. Even a copy of *No 10 Downing Street — The Story of a Home*, signed by Alex Douglas-Home, Edward Heath, Margaret Thatcher and John Major, raised £54,000. A new law has been added to the old laws of the market: *caveat emptor* and *gaudent* party treasurer.

Those reckless with language might describe such prices as obscene. Cynics might suspect panic at losing the election or, even (never let it be said) the last minute desire for honours. But, as good Conservatives know, the market is the fairest way to determine prices. On the night, in the company, those were the prices these objects fetched. Those who object should avoid auctions. And if they found themselves at this one by accident or pleasant invitation, they could always sit still, nowhere near the chandelier, and listen to the song that summed up the evening, sung by the inimitable Shirley Bassey in a costume that could not have smuggled even an Old Miniature past the customs: *Hey, Big Spender*.

Back to the future

From Mrs S. Griffith

Sir, On the old route of the A5 near Oswestry, now bypassed, there is a single-storey house with a particularly large sitting-room. It is "The Old Little Chef" (letter, February 8). Yours faithfully,
SUE GRIFFITH,
Rushall, Penllan, Denbigh, Clwyd.
February 8.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Piccadilly, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Cautious voices on Nato expansion

From Sir Patrick Duffy, Deputy Chairman of the Atlantic Council of the United Kingdom, and Mr Alan Lee Williams, Director

Sir, The Atlantic Council has been active in promoting public discussion of Nato enlargement, and is now agreed on expansion, provided that it is on realistic terms and does not antagonise the Russians. We agree, however, with your leading article (February 7) that when such a distinguished figure as the former diplomat George Kennan describes Nato expansion as a "foolish error" we should listen.

It is vital that we should address Russia's concern that Nato expansion to include Central and Eastern European countries that were formerly satellites of the Soviet empire would be a threat to Russian interests. The prospects are not unfavourable. Nato has pledged not to station nuclear forces in the new member states, and wants to involve Russia more closely in European security. Russian participation in the Bosnian peace force is regarded as the model for a future East-West military partnership.

Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, remains hostile but has been in dialogue with Javier Solana, Secretary-General of Nato, who promises that no avenues for agreement should be left unexplored. These presumably would include not only successful Nato initiatives such as the Bosnia peace-force and Partnership for Peace, but also early talks on CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) and START-3. They could also include political co-operation with Western Europe, and economic relations with the IMF, the Paris Club of leading industrial country creditors and the World Bank.

The latest proposal, according to your report today, is to persuade Russia to join a "Nato Russia Council", which would hold its inaugural meeting at the Nato summit in Madrid in July. The crucial question is whether Russia will be given equal partnership on such a council and whether, if it is given a vote, that vote could be used to meet its legitimate concerns without fully compromising Nato.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK DUFFY,
Deputy Chairman,
ALAN LEE WILLIAMS,
Director,
Atlantic Council of the
United Kingdom,
20 Grosvenor Place, SW1.
February 10.

From the Director of the
British American Security
Information Council

Sir, Your leader is right to call for a full debate on Nato expansion. The US Congress has requested President Clinton to produce a cost-benefit analysis of expansion before it authorises the necessary funds.

The British Government should do the same. The public ought to know the risks and benefits of expansion and how much they will have to pay to subsidise the military in Central and Eastern Europe. It is surprising that both the Conservative and Labour leaderships are committed to Nato's expansion when it is clear at West-minster that backbench opinion, in both parties, is deeply sceptical.

Yours sincerely,
DANIEL T. PLESCH,
Director, British American
Security Information Council,
Carrara House,
20 Embankment Place, WC2.
February 7.

From the London Bureau Chief of RIA-Novosti

Sir, How right of George Kennan and your leading article to draw attention to the risks of Western leaders' Nato expansion plans.

Now that Russia, by nearly all admissions, is making big strides on the road to democracy and a market economy, the argument that it is supposedly more dangerous to Nato than were the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact sounds strange in the least.

Should President Clinton and Congress still be taking their cue from such proponents of the 1970s Cold War era as Zbigniew Brzezinski and the "Michigan Polish" lobby? If the position of Russia's chief enemies of the West is strengthened inside Russia, we could see a precipitation of a revision of Russian foreign policy in general, and a new division line in general and a new division line in general.

Pursuit of Nato's eastward expansion could be as Presidential Chief of Staff Anatoli Chubais pointed out at the Davos economic forum last week, the "biggest mistake in Western foreign policy for 50 years".

Yours faithfully,
ANDREI OLEINIK,
London Bureau Chief,
Russian Information Agency —
Novosti,
3 Rossky Gardens, SW7.
February 10.

From Mrs S. Griffith

Sir, On the old route of the A5 near Oswestry, now bypassed, there is a single-storey house with a particularly large sitting-room. It is "The Old Little Chef" (letter, February 8). Yours faithfully,
SUE GRIFFITH,
Rushall, Penllan, Denbigh, Clwyd.
February 8.

Pay-freeze plan raises temperatures

From Professor Frank Wallace, FEng

Sir, I wish to take issue with Lord Rees-Mogg's forcefully argued article ("Mr Brown's big freeze", February 6) in which he inveighs against the folly of attempting to interfere with the operation of the free labour market.

It is surely disingenuous to argue that unless we pay our top civil servants, judges, generals and ministers salaries comparable with those of top directors in industry, not to mention fund managers (of whom we have heard so much lately, not all of it flattering), their professions will be left the poorer (letters, February 6, 7, 11).

When this argument largely ignores the distinction between the private sector, in which no holds are barred, and the public sector which, until not so long ago, was regarded as a career offering ample fulfilment to able men and women, bringing them far greater than purely monetary rewards.

There are surely many who, after the well-recognised excesses of the unbridled free market, which have led to ever-growing inequalities between rich and poor and to the neglect of much of our national infrastructure, doubt whether the unchecked operation of market forces can bring about a fair and just society. In my view, that should remain one of our abiding objectives.

Yours faithfully,
F. J. WALLACE,
Cedarwood Cottage,
22 St. Ronan's Road, Bath.
February 7.

From Mr David J. Savage

Sir, There seems to be no shortage of applicants for any judicial appointment. As the laws of supply and demand (market forces) appear to be operating so well, what justification is there for the Government to increase judicial salaries?

Yours faithfully,
DAVID J. SAVAGE,
Foster Savage & Gordon (solicitors),
269 Farnborough Road, Farnborough, Hampshire.
February 10.

From Mr T. A. Backhouse

Sir, Sir John Acland, in his letter (February 7) about the pay freeze for senior public servants, goes into raptures about the benefits of the example which they set to those who do not qualify for this dubious privilege.

Am I being stupid in failing to understand what exactly it is that those who are compulsorily denied some-

thing, which an independent body has decided they deserve, are supposed to exemplify?

Yours faithfully,
T. A. BACKHOUSE,
St Margaret's Cottage,
Polgoon, Cornwall.
February 7.

From Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC

Sir, Instead of seeking to deny judges the prompt payment of the modest increases in their salaries recommended by the independent review body, Gordon Brown (report and leading article, February 7) should increase the rate of income tax that senior lawyers and other top earners pay.

Those who have abandoned lucrative careers to give dedicated public service should not be used as political scapegoats: otherwise the quality of public service, on which we all depend, will surely suffer.

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY LESTER,
House of Lords.
February 7.

From Sir Frederick Lawton

Sir, If Gordon Brown, on becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer after April 1997, sought to rescind the second part of any order made before the next election by the present Lord Chancellor for implementing the recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Body for judges' salaries he would be likely to involve a new Labour government in a grave constitutional dispute.

From 1701, when the Act of Settlement was passed, until 1973 Parliament alone decided what judicial salaries should be. It only used its power to do so on four occasions: 1823, 1832, 1854 and 1965. By the Administration of Justice Act 1973 Parliament decided that the salaries of Supreme Court judges could be raised, but not lowered, by Order made by the Lord Chancellor. Such Orders, if the correct parliamentary procedure is followed, have the force of law.

If Gordon Brown purported to rescind part of any Order made by the present Lord Chancellor, seemingly he would be trying to suspend an existing law. The Bill of Rights 1689 forbids the executive to do anything of the kind.

Yours truly,
FREDERICK LAWTON,
1 The Village, Skelton, Yorkshire.
February 11.

Labour's policy on school selection

From the Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Employment

Sir, Your leading article, "Grammar report" (February 8), implies, quite wrongly, that my statement of our position on grammar school ballots is a new position for the Wirral South by-election.

Your guide to the issues in the general election (January 20) described Labour's policy thus:

The 161 existing grammar schools would be turned into comprehensives only if enough local parents signed a petition and then voted equal selection.

This was also the position in our paper *Diversity and Excellence*, launched on June 22, 1995, which I set out in an article in *The Times* that day. Had you checked your own files, you could have avoided the suggestion that this is a cynical change of policy.

Cynicism towards politics and politicians after the last 18 years is understandable, but it doesn't help our democracy to reinforce it when such cynicism is not borne out by the facts.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID BLUNKETT,
House of Commons.
February 10.

From Mr George Walden

Sir, Tess Blackstone ("Places, not vouchers, for under-fives", February 7) quotes me in support of Labour on the Assisted Places Scheme. The argument in my book, *We Should Know Better*, is that to do away with the scheme without putting anything in its place would make private schools even more exclusive than they are.

My solution — opening them up to the talents on a voluntary basis — is supported by many independent schools but opposed by Labour, because it inevitably involves selection.

Listening to the selectively educated voices of Labour spokesmen praising egalitarianism is reminiscent of the old Soviet *nomenklatura* prating about peace, or the historical primacy of the proletariat.

Now Mr Blunkett is ready to countenance selection in grammar schools, do Labour objections to opening up private schools fall away? What is Baroness Blackstone's position?

Yours faithfully,
GEORGE WALDEN,
House of Commons.
February 10.

From Dr David Waller

Sir, Whilst working in Singapore in 1990 I watched Lee Kuan Yew speak to Singaporeans on television about their achievements in the 25 years since independence. The Government had become aware that many more women were working, and that children were not being cared for so well (letter, February 7) after finishing school.

He suggested that perhaps children would be better cared for if they could stay at school to do their homework

until a parent returned home. The Government would try the scheme in four schools on the island and, if the public liked it, would implement it throughout the island. They did and it is.

This is just one example of a mature discussion between government and the public to solve everyday problems.

Contrast it with the pathetic "marketing" approach we are fed, and notice our demoralised, badly educated kids sleeping on the streets

Forthcoming marriages

THE TIMES WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12 1997

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OBITUARIES

Anthony Baines, musician, Curator of the Baile Collection of historical instruments at Oxford University. 1970-80, died on February 3 aged 84. He was born on October 6, 1912.

Tony Baines was the pre-eminent authority in Britain on musical instruments of all sorts. His two most important books — *Woodwind Instruments and their History*, first published in 1957, and *Brass Instruments, their History and Development* (1976) — have influenced all subsequent studies in the field, while anyone who has come to the subject in the past five years is indebted to his *Oxford Companion to Musical Instruments* (1992).

Anthony Cuthbert Baines was born in Oxford and went to Westminster School with a King's Scholarship, returning thence, again as a scholar, to Christ Church where he read Chemistry. He was already a musician, first as a clarinetist, and then a bassoonist, and he went from Oxford, yet again as a scholar, to the Royal College of Music. His advancement there was such that within 18 months he was playing with the London Philharmonic, and from 1935 to 1939 he was bassoonist and contrabassoonist there.

During the war he was commissioned into the Royal Tank Regiment and was wounded and captured while with the Eighth Army in Italy. Twice he escaped, once from a train and once from a lorry, and twice he was recaptured; the Germans set a price on his head. While in captivity he organised an orchestra, at first with a heterogeneous collection of instruments bribe into the camp and later with a rather better set sent in by the Red Cross. Among other works, he wrote out from memory the orchestral parts of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

After the war he returned to the LPO, where he remained until 1949. From 1950 he was associate conductor of the International Ballet, and it was there that he met the oboist Patricia Margaret Stammers, who became his wife.

Baines changed professions in 1954 and moved to Uppingham School as head of music, and thence to Dean

ANTHONY BAINES



Close School in 1965. In 1970 his research into musical instruments came to fruition as he became the first curator of the Baile Collection of (as it was) Historical Woodwind Instruments.

Both Philip Bate and he had been among the 11 founding members of the Galpin Society, friends and disciples of Canon F.W. Galpin, whose seminal *Old English Instruments of Music* of 1910 laid the foundations not only for

the study of early instruments but for their revival and their use. All 11 were players and collectors, and eight of them wrote books and articles which are still standard texts in the subject today.

Baines was the editor of the society's journal from 1960 to 1963 and again from 1970 to 1983. In the meantime, Philip Bate had presented his outstanding collection of woodwind instruments to the University of Oxford, where it was deposited in the Faculty of

Music. Once the post of lecturer/curator was established, Baines, by then the world's leading authority on woodwind instruments, was the obvious choice for the position. He became a Fellow of University College.

The collection expanded rapidly under his care, initially through his own generosity, for he gave many of his own instruments and lent all the rest, and they remain there to this day. On his retirement he took home only one recorder for his own use. He widened the scope of the collection, with his gifts of brass instruments and instruments of all forms from other cultures. He also attracted many other loans and gifts, pre-eminently the collections of Reginald Morley-Pegge and Edgar Hunt.

In the best traditions of the Galpin Society, the Baile Collection was established as a playing collection. Instruments were borrowed freely by students and others and were played in orchestras, both within the university and in London and even abroad.

This free access made the collection unique among the world's major museums, for in few others is it possible even to touch an instrument. Baines would open any showcase and hand an instrument to even the most casual inquirer, and as a result many eminent musicians in the early music world had their first hands-on experience, and their enthusiasm kindled.

His knowledge of other instrument collections was extensive, and this enabled him to establish what might be called one of the first 'virtual museums', for no single institution in the world could boast the collection portrayed in his *European and American Musical Instruments*, a veritable museum between the covers of a book. In 1980 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

In retirement he had the time to pursue his interests in wildlife, especially flowers, and in painting and drawing, an interest that had grown when recuperating from a serious accident. While gradually showing his age, he remained fully active until a recent stroke confined him to a nursing home.

His wife survives him.

PHILIP HOWARD

Philip Howard, OBE, expatriate businessman, died on January 13 aged 83. He was born on August 17, 1913.

PHILIP HOWARD was one of a small group of Britons who championed African aspirations before the 'wind of

change' brought an end to British imperialism in the 1960s. He went on to make a substantial contribution to the early development of Malawi after it gained independence in 1964. He was appointed OBE in 1963.

Born the second of four sons to a long-established Cam-

bridgeshire family who owned land in the village of Meldreth, Howard learnt independence early. He joined the Merchant Navy while still a teenager, and after four years' service, settled in South Africa where, among other enterprises, he set up a cattle ranch. He served as a pilot in

the South African Air Force in the Second World War.

His experiences in South Africa and Swaziland made him eager to help the oppressed to realise their potential. Arriving in what was then Nyasaland in 1946, he became a staunch supporter of African nationalism.

He was first managing director and later chairman of the London and Blantyre Supply Company, then a colonial outpost of the Booker McConnell group engaged in retail and wholesale distribution. Under his guidance Bookers (Malawi) expanded into clothing manufacture and nut processing and pioneered tea growing in the Northern Region. At a time when Africans were expected to remain in menial jobs, he encouraged the promotion and training of Malawians to managerial positions.

Howard befriended Hastings Banda on his return to Nyasaland in 1958, looking after his affairs during Banda's detention and organising support for detainees' families, including commanding payment of those employed by Booker — in the face of hostility from colonial officials and the expatriate community.

His contribution was recognised after independence when Banda appointed him the first chairman of the Malawi Development Corporation and of Air Malawi, a director of the Reserve Bank and a member of several newly created boards.

Despite misgivings about the growing authoritarianism of President Banda, Howard remained deeply committed to Malawi's development. However, his influence with the President and his forthright advocacy of national — as opposed to personal — interests aroused enmity. He found himself increasingly unwelcome and left Malawi in 1973, returning to Meldreth.

There he grew splendid vegetables and restored antique furniture until prevented by failing eyesight and infirmity. He enjoyed the visits of his many friends.

He was survived by his second wife Ayesha, whom he married in 1955, and by a son and a daughter of his first second.

PERSONAL COLUMN

FLATSHARE

RENTING FURNISHED FLATSHARING AGREEMENTS

Too much body Wax is bad for women

It's, burns and a few stretch marks in between: why does Ruby Wax waste her wit on reducing women to their reproductive components? A really sharp comic in the Jewish-American tradition, with an original and merry talent for confounding scepticism to the camera, she spoils it all with a loathing of her body, constantly hating its bits that are bigger, smaller or saggier than some other female's.

And why does the BBC let her? The new Beeb time and again fails to recognise the fine line between rejuvenation and dumbing-down. The vulgar self-indulgence allowed *Ruby Wax Meets ...* on BBC1 on Monday nights bodes ill for the coming rethink of its news.

Why should our licence fee, etc? etc? All the scorn lavished on the BBC's cossetting of Chris Evans ought to be poured on it for Ms Wax instead. At the start of Wax's programme, the actress Helen Mirren looked like being intelligent and defiantly unglossy enough to avoid the traps into which Wax so deftly led the vain Imelda Marcos and the cash-starved Duchess of York.

But no. By the end, the unmarried, middle-aged Mirren was wondering aloud why men fall for silicon breasts. She was enticed into shopping for a clockwork doll. "She's gone all maternal," said Wax (mother of three) triumphantly.

In the interview that followed, the beautiful Julianne Margulies of *ER*, in answer to the question "Do you find yourself like, now that you're successful, becoming an asshole?", volunteered that she still folded her own knicker. Wax had to go one better. Her producer told her panties, she said. Thereupon this gentleman, Clive Tulloch, included in the shot (another of the show's indulgences) the week before he helped Wax to simulate a gymnastic sexual position upside down against a tree, joked that he sniffs the panties, too.

It is not often I think of Lord Reith, but I did then.

I write as a fan. Ruby Wax is so good that she really ought to try harder. An advance look at next week's interview with Bill Cosby (done before his recent personal tragedy) reminded me how much better she is without that gaudy "sisters shopping together" approach. She allows Cosby to render her almost speechless while he reveals himself as prickly, humourless and self-important.

Then, with some outrageous bad-taste questions, she exposes the simmering tension between America's Jews and blacks that is even now making the news. And she does not even have to mention body parts. Cosby volunteers that he is not circumcised.

Wax's success with the BBC is forcing me



BRENDA MADDOX

to abandon a cherished theory — that Joan Rivers, another American funny woman, bombed in Britain because she holds the Hollywood belief that a physical flaw is a moral flaw. So Barbara Bush's chin droops; where's the big laugh? But Wax is making her way by purveying this assumption that all females are locked in cut-and-cut anatomical competition and will do anything to improve what cruel nature has given them.

Her programmes with *Baywatch*'s Pamela Anderson were the pits. Not content with comparing the hairlessness of her bikini region with the beach beauty's, on the second interview, on February 3, she even trotted out her own baby to hold up beside Anderson's. How low, as the tabloids say of Fergie, can you go?

The Wax approach is unfair to women. The British media are obsessed with female organs as never before. They should not be encouraged: flatter stomachs — to be given them; wombs, full, empty and for rent; Wonderbras, pro and con. The late American Ambassador to France is ostracised in terms of her crotch. The thought that the sex that grows babies can do something else as well occupies more print and screen space than the Middle East. Were the long-awaited creature from Mars to arrive, it would think that females on this plane are freaks.

The fall from media grace of Nicola "Superwoman" Hollick is not, as some argue, a sign of an anti-feminist campaign to put women back in the home and keep them there. Nor, for all its shoddiness, was *Panorama's* "Missing Mum". The misogyny now on display is older than feminism. It's Golden Bough stuff. Males feel shut out of this marvellous trick that female bodies can perform. Their resentment is only increased by the way in which some women go on and on about it.

So, Ruby Wax, belt up down there. Imelda Marcos's shoes are a better subject for you than Pamela Anderson's behind. Pretending that shopping reveals the inner woman is as bad as cooking the books to prove that working mothers are bad for children. These stunts serve to keep female the freakish sex: a long way from equality.

Zoe Heller, a columnist in *The Sunday Times*, is another witty woman who has turned the spotlight on her ageing womb. Every week she reports on her search for the man who will give her a baby. She was quite right to walk out on the California boyfriend who refused on the ground that he has done the parenthood thing already. I hope Zoe gets her wish — but not if we have to read all about it.

Wax's success with the BBC is forcing me

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Currently one of the most exciting companies in its sector, its share price has already increased by some 65% since flotation. Airtech plc is now committed to a further sales drive to widen its customer base and increase its market share still further and is seeking three senior sales managers to cover key

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Portillo's Chinese whispers

INTERNAL party politics will jostle with defence matters for Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, when he visits Hong Kong next week. Specialist defence writers have been ordered off his trip and editorial writers and political writers invited instead.

Critics claim that this means only one thing. Portillo wants this last visit from a British Defence Secretary to the colony before it reverts to Chinese control to advance his own cause within the Conservative Party.

In using foreign trips to pursue his own leadership claims, he is hardly alone. When Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, visited Russia last month to discuss crime, he invited home-affairs specialists. Then he decided political editors were more the thing. When they were forthcoming, his departing left him with only a feature writer from *The Mail on Sunday* to chronicle his Nixonian trip. There is retribution for such naked politicking. Nothing has been written about his trip.

The fall from media grace of



Yentob: where was he?

ANOTHER coup for the media world's least punctual man, Alan Yentob, the BBC's director of programmes, was to have joined Michael Parkinson, Verity Lambert and Lynda La Plante on stage during a ceremony at the National Film Theatre on the South Bank last Thursday, where the British Film Institute was awarding its first fellowships to people in the television industry.

Parky, Lambert and La Plante were suitably humbled and appreciative of the honour, but Yentob was nowhere to be seen. He eventually turned up 40 minutes late.

Perhaps he was too busy filling in his job application for Channel 4.

Making mischief
GIVING evidence last week to the Heritage Select Committee's inquiry into the BBC and the future of broadcasting, David Einstein, chief executive of Channel 5, dropped what appeared to be a bombshell.

"One of the things the BBC is considering on its subscription channels," he told MPs, "is offering viewers advance opportunities to see programmes before they are shown on BBC1 and 2. What does that make BBC licence-payers? Second-class citizens?"

If true, it would effectively mean that BBC licence fee money would be used to subsidise the corporation's commercial activities, leaving less well-off viewers unable to afford a subscription to the new "preview channel" subsidising those who could.

The BBC issued not one, but two categorical denials. It seems that Mr Einstein was referring to the interactive cable TV pilot project run by BT last year, which used BBC programmes but which is now over. How encouraging it is, nevertheless, to see he has not lost his penchant for mischief-making.

Busy elsewhere?

THE Man from the Pru, one of advertising's most enduring slogans, is being resurrected in a £20 million multi-media campaign beginning on Friday.

The ambitious branding drive marks the long-awaited first work on the Prudential by Abbott Mead Vickers, which landed the account a year ago and has been discussing strategy with the client ever since.

In a variation from the original campaign, which was created in the early 1950s and last seen on our screens 20 years ago, the "man" will this time be Sir Peter Davis, group chief executive of the UK's largest life insurer.

Jim Sunifre, chief executive of the Prudential UK, says: "Our customer

research has shown that even after all this time the man from the Pru is still

well loved. Quite simply, he refuses to fit for the 21st century."

THE SET of *Gays and Dolls* at the National Theatre is the somewhat surprising venue for one of the biggest advertising events ever to be staged.

Organised by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, the March 18

spectacle, entitled "It pays to ad-

vertise", will feature talks and debates on such issues as advertising effectiveness and how advertising works; as well as numerous exhibitions of creativity.

Mark Robinson, the IPA event

chairman, says: "We are putting the advertising industry on show in a

spectacular way and we hope to attract



Branagh: Hello darling

● The decision by the shy and retiring Liam Gallagher and Patsy Kensit to call off their wedding, because they didn't care for their pictures to be taken by photographers, profited one entrepreneur. As rain lashed the press pack that continued to camp outside the couple's house, a waterproof-clothing salesman turned up and made £120 in minutes.

lists dishes from books by Marco Pierre White, Anthony Worrall Thompson and even Delia Smith as past their sell-by date. But most conspicuous was the near absence of the magazine's own cookery writer, Nigel Slater. He got the briefest mention in passing but his books were clearly not worth listing. Instead the article picked out works on Australian cookery.

● A certain glossy magazine continues to pervade every corner of our culture, even influencing our great Shakespeareans. In BBC2's forthcoming documentary about the making of its four-hour, uncut screen version of *Hamlet*, Kenneth Branagh gives his interpretation of the movie: "These people could be stepping out of the pages of a 19th-century Hello! magazine."

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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12 1997

ROBIN MAYER



Sir Brian Jenkins, right, and John Stewart, added their smiles to that of the new Woolwich girl after members voted in favour of the society's flotation

Sterling highest since leaving ERM

BY JANET BUSH
ECONOMICS EDITOR

THE pound surged to its highest level since the day it was ejected from the European exchange rate mechanism in 1992, profiting from increasing depreciation about the German economy which depressed the mark.

Sterling's index against a basket of currencies closed at 98.2, up from 97 on Monday, its highest level since September 16, 1992. It gained four pence against the mark to DM2.7458, a 52-month high.

The pound's rally came as John Major said the British economy was more competitive than it had been in a long time, despite sterling's rise in recent months. Some foreign exchange dealers took his comments as a signal that the Government is not overly concerned about the pound's strength and will not act to limit its rise.

At the same time, the mark was depressed by concerns about sluggish growth and rising unemployment. A BBC report said rising unemployment had pushed expectations for Germany's budget deficit to 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product this year, above the Maastricht treaty limit of 3 per cent. The German Finance Ministry took issue with the report, saying it had no reason to change its forecast of a deficit of 2.9 per cent of GDP.

The pound has resumed its rise despite expectations that Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, will continue to hold out against Bank of England demands for higher base rates. Yesterday, Howard Davies, deputy governor of the Bank, said the Bank was still looking for a quarter-point rise.

In a speech to the Housing Corporation conference, Mr Davies said: "lest this observation create unnecessary alarm, I should say that the rise in rates that we think necessary to meet the target is modest. We have been talking about 0.25 per cent in the short term, with perhaps a little more later in the year."

His remarks came on the eve of today's publication of the Bank's latest *Inflation Report*, expected by City analysts to revise up its inflation forecasts and emphasise the need for a modest tightening of monetary policy.

Mr Clarke has withstood Bank demands for a rise in rates for the past three monthly monetary meetings, citing in part the strength of the pound.

British construction orders were 8 per cent higher in the fourth quarter compared with the previous three months and 1 per cent higher in 1996 as a whole than in 1995.

Fresh blow for Sears as Freemans sale referred

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

SEARS, the troubled retail company, suffered a new setback yesterday when the £395 million sale of Freemans to Littlewoods was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The decision surprised the City and share in Sears slipped 20, to close at 83 1/2p. The market is concerned that it could jeopardise Sears' plans to use the sale proceeds for a share buyback or special dividend and casts further doubts over the future of Liam Strong, the chief executive.

Sears described the referral as "disappointing" but said it

remains confident that the deal is not anti-competitive. Both companies reaffirmed their intention to proceed with a sale — although the original deal has now lapsed.

John Taylor, Minister for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, said the planned deal raised competition concerns.

If approved, Littlewoods would increase its share of the total UK mail order market from 15.5 per cent to almost 25 per cent — in touching distance of the market leader, Great Universal Stores.

Freemans occupies the number three position, making a profit of £38 million in 1995 — although 1996 profits

are expected to be lower. Littlewoods hopes to make annual cost savings of £25 million by integrating the businesses which could result in job losses at Freemans' sites in London, Peterborough, Sheffield and Orpington.

But the threat of job losses is not regarded as a major factor in the referral, which the market believes comes after strong lobbying from European competitors.

Sears, which also owns Selfridges, Warehouse and Shoe Express, put Freemans up for sale as part of its plan to revitalise its flagging business. The company also promised to make a £40 million

share buyback or special dividend using the cash from the sale and money raised from a separate disposal of a shopping centre in July.

Analysts expect that the two companies will respond by pointing to competition in the wider market from European mail order businesses and from the catalogue arms of retailers such as Next and Burton. Most analysts believe the deal will ultimately be cleared, leaving Sears able to complete on time its plans to return money to shareholders.

Sears has endured a torrid spell recently. It issued a profit warning at the beginning of January and later in the

month faced public criticism from small shareholders at the EGM called to approve the sale of Freemans.

The profit warning, coupled with a poor Christmas trading statement, led analysts to downgrade full-year forecasts by around 20 per cent, to £80 million. The company is also taking an exceptional loss of £220 million on the Freemans sale, which coupled with a £25 million loss from the reversion of stores leased to Fascat, will plunge Sears into the red to the tune of around £165 million when it announces its full-year results at the end of April.

The MMC report has to be completed by June 9.

Woolwich members support flotation

BY CAROLINE MERRELL

AN overwhelming majority of the members of the Woolwich Building Society have voted in favour of its proposals to convert and float on the stock market.

Of the 70 per cent of investing members entitled to vote who did so, 95 per cent backed the resolution, the same percentage as for borrowing members.

Around 1,300 Woolwich members attended a special general meeting at the London Arena yesterday to discuss the proposals. The questions from the floor ranged from concerns about the share distribution to a demand that the Woolwich should not get involved in the transport of land mines after conversion.

Thomas Lines, an investing member, wanted to hear the arguments against conversion in detail. This request was refused by Sir Brian Jenkins, Woolwich chairman, who claimed that the issue was covered entirely by the transfer document. Mr Lines said: "I am now talking to the Nationwide — their mortgage rate is relatively low."

Roger Hill, an investing member, wanted to know why the conversion costs were so high. He said: "The costs of transfer are exorbitant at £50 million." Stanley Wentworth, an investing member, said he wanted the board to guarantee that it would not get involved in the arms trade or the export of land mines.

The Woolwich has been one of the most vociferous opponents of the Building Societies Bill. Under the terms of the Bill, societies that go on the acquisition trail after flotation lose their protection against takeover. John Stewart, Woolwich chief executive, said: "We are unlikely to abandon conversion, even if the Bill goes ahead."

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET		
FTSE 100	4304.2	(-4.1)
FTSE All share	2008.52	(-2.04)
Nikkei	Closed	
New York	8354.55	(-30.03)
S&P Composite	707.49	(-2.05)

MARKETS

FOREIGN EXCHANGE		
US dollar	87.94*	(8.94)
Long Bond	87.75*	(9.71)
Yield	8.70%	(8.71%)

INTEREST RATES

INTEREST RATES		
Bank of England	10.00%	(1.00%)
Federal Funds	8.74%	(8.74%)
Long Bond	87.75*	(9.71%)
Yield	8.70%	(8.71%)

STOCK MARKET

STOCK MARKET		
London	1,300	(1,000)
DM	1,570.9	(1,558)
FF	2,746.2	(2,705)
SP	9,257.2	(9,131)
Yen	120.63	(120.63)
S Index	103.1	(102.7)

Yield

Managers acquire Devonport for £40.3m

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

DEVONPORT Royal Dockyard, which won the £5 billion contract to refit the four Trident submarines and other nuclear boats in 1993, is to be sold for £40.3 million to the management company that has been running the Plymouth yard for nearly ten years.

Although Devonport Management Ltd (DML) was the only tenderer for the privatisation deal, it has taken three years for the sale to be negotiated. The other royal dockyard, at Rosyth in Fife, was sold to Babcock International for £27 million last November.

DML's negotiations with the Ministry of Defence have been particularly complex because of the added requirement to modernise the yard to new safety standards. The extended bargaining forced the MoD to give some of the nuclear submarine work to Rosyth.

The agreement to sell the yard to DML was announced in a Commons written answer by James Arbuthnot, the Defence Procurement Minister. There is a separate contract for the modernisation programme, which will be funded by the MoD. There are strict incentive clauses in the contract which could result in penalties if deadlines are not met.

The MoD said the cost of the modernisation was confidential. The sale ran into difficulty when studies revealed that the cost of upgrading the ageing docks at Devonport to meet new nuclear safety requirements would be £100 million more than expected.

The main shareholder in the DML consortium is Brown & Root, the American company whose UK parent company, Halliburton Holdings, has 51 per cent of the shares.

The phased modernisation programme is due to be completed early in the next century in time for the first Trident refit. There are currently two Trident submarines in service.

Mr Arbuthnot said the sale of Devonport and Rosyth represented "good value for money". DML sources said the purchase was "fair".

Rolls-Royce has won an estimated £100 million contract to develop a new nuclear-powered system for Royal Navy submarines that will last for 25 to 30 years, the life span of a submarine. The development work will be carried out at the MoD's Vulcan factory at Dounreay, in Caithness.

Investors' vote on new directors urged

By ADAM JONES

NEW company directors should not be given firm contracts until shareholders have voted on the appointment at a general meeting, according to an investors' pressure group.

The UK Shareholders Association made the radical suggestion in its submission to the Hampel committee's inquiry into corporate governance. It said companies currently sign a firm contract with a new board member as a matter of course. It can be more than a year before members at a general meeting are asked to "elect" the new recruit.

The association said this presents shareholders with an



London presentation: Declan McSweeney, AIB Group's chief financial officer, left, and Eamon McElroy, managing director of AIB Group UK

Pump wars make £85m hole in BP profitability

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

PETROL PUMP wars have taken their toll of British Petroleum, which revealed yesterday that it had lost £85 million of profits on the forecourts.

John Browne, chief executive, described the war in the UK market as "unusually intense". The oil companies have had to respond to price competition from the large supermarkets. BP, which controls 2,000 petrol stations in Britain, has upgraded 300 of them as well as launching petrol sales in Moscow and China.

BP also saw a further £60 million eroded by the strength of sterling. However, productivity gains and higher oil

prices helped the company to raise overall replacement cost profits by 30 per cent, to £2.62 billion, in the year to December 31. After exceptional costs, which included a £341 million provision for a joint venture with Mobil, profits were still clear of the £2 billion mark at £2.15 billion.

However, Sir David Simon, chairman of BP, gave warning that such growth was unlikely to be repeated. The oil giant remained optimistic about its prospects because of low inflation and increasing demand for oil.

The stock market responded by marking the shares down 27p, to 694p, largely because the results were at the lower

end of expectations. The quarterly dividend, payable on May 6, was raised 5 per cent to 5.25p, pushing the total dividend 28 per cent higher, to 19.5p.

Oil prices improved by 20 per cent last year compared with 1995, with a barrel of crude costing \$20.4 dollars at the end of the fourth quarter. The company said productivity improvements through volume growth, higher value sales and cost reductions produced gains of around \$600 million, generating most of the year-on-year improvement in underlying profit.

BP said "targets are in place to keep underlying perfor-

mance improving", but added that there may be some oil price volatility in coming months because of worldwide production growth.

The company said continuing strong demand, relatively modest production increases and the decision by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) in December to roll over its production quota enabled the oil market to absorb the initial resumption of oil exports from Iraq. But BP added that an increase in the rate of production growth over the coming months might subject oil prices to renewed volatility.

Tempus, page 23

AIB chief parries questions over expansion

By EILEEN McCABE
IN DUBLIN

TOM MULCAHY, chief executive of AIB, the Irish Republic's largest bank, yesterday parried questions about future expansion plans in the US.

After weekend reports that AIB was tipped to buy Riggs National Corporation, which is based in Washington, Mr Mulcahy reiterated the bank's broad policy of developing a balance of business in America, the UK and the Republic.

He added that several issues relating to AIB's recently announced £1840 million acquisition of Dauphin Deposit Corp, a Pennsylvania bank, had still to be settled and the outcome would dictate whether the group would have the capacity to embark on further expansion in the short term.

Turning to the results for 1996, Mr Mulcahy said that the 13 per cent growth in pre-tax profits to £142 million reflected a strong performance across all divisions and geographical areas.

Loan growth in the Republic jumped almost 20 per cent, with Northern Ireland and the US recording growth of more than 10 per cent. In Britain loans were up just over 7 per cent.

Overall, group deposits were up 10 per cent, with the Republic recording 13 per cent growth, compared with just under 7 per cent in the US.

The highlight of the year's performance was a 60 per cent growth in profits to £120 million by ARK Life, AIB's assurance company. Mr Mulcahy said the success of ARK, which entered the market in 1991, was a direct result of the new sales culture that influenced all of the bank's activities.

Earnings per share for the year were up 12 per cent to 38.4p. There will be a second interim dividend of 9.05p, payable on March 27, giving a total of 15p.

The results were presented in London by Eamon McElroy, managing director of AIB Group UK, and Declan McSweeney, chief financial officer of AIB Group.



McElroy: expecting projects

Fight to curb insurance tax rise fails

By OLIVER AUGUST
LONDON faces further traffic chaos because of extensive new work on the capital's rail network. The Go-Ahead Group said yesterday after being named as the successful bidder for the Thameslink franchise.

The bus company's warning came as National Express was selected as the preferred bidder for the Central Trains franchise — the last of the 25 franchises offered under rail privatisation.

Thameslink, the main north-south rail link across London from Bedford to Brighton, will twice be interrupted for up to six months each time during the next six years. The interruptions will be because of the

Thameslink 2000 upgrading programme and the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to north London.

The new operator of the franchise will be compensated for not being able to use the tracks between Blackfriars and Farringdon stations. Go-Ahead will own the Thameslink franchise in partnership with the Via GTI group of France. Go-Ahead has a 65 per cent stake in their Govia joint venture. Over the seven-year franchise, Govia will pay an average franchise premium of £17 million per annum to the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising.

Leading article, page 19

Rail franchise won by Go-Ahead bid

By OLIVER AUGUST

Thameslink 2000 upgrading programme and the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to north London.

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Leading article, page 19

Extraordinary general meeting votes on demerger plan today

Big majority likely for British Gas split

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

OVERWHELMING support from institutions and small shareholders today is expected to clear the path for British Gas to split into two companies.

Voting by proxy on the demerger, which will split off Centrica, the supply business delivering gas to industry and households, has been under way since British Gas sent out its demerger documents more than a month ago.

Although a breakaway group of small shareholders, led by Noel Falconer, is likely to set out objections to the split at the extraordinary general meeting in Birmingham today, it is believed that the company has already secured a massive majority in favour of the demerger. It is an extraordinary meeting an alterna-

tive resolution cannot be tabled so those shareholders attending will only be able to vote for or against the demerger.

Shares in Centrica will begin trading on Monday amid increasing speculation that the business could be taken over. Oil companies have been tipped as the most likely to want to buy the business, which is saddled with take-or-pay contracts that force it to buy gas at higher prices than the achievable sale price. Centrica was trading at 70p on the grey market yesterday.

British Gas is in the middle of protracted negotiations with the oil companies that produce the gas in an attempt to scale down its obligations and has struck a couple of deals.

British Gas will keep the initials BG for the rest of the company encompassing TransCo, the pipeline business, and the exploration and development operations.

TransCo is dogged by the fear of future regulation. It is in the middle of a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into price control after the company rejected cuts set by Ofgas, the industry watchdog headed by Clare Spottiswoode. Further in the future TransCo could face a substantial stripping of its assets as a result of the regulator revealing plans to hive off progressively all areas that could be moved into the competitive arena, leaving TransCo as little more than a head office.



Spottiswoode: price curb

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Sketchley to expand with £29m purchase

SKETCHLEY, the dry cleaning company, is to expand its business services division with the £29 million purchase of ARM Group, an installer of telecommunications ducts to British Telecom. Sketchley has agreed to pay another £8.4 million, depending on ARM's financial performance in 2000. In the 11 months to November 30, ARM generated operating profits of £4.1 million on turnover of £49.5 million.

ARM was founded 30 years ago to lay telecoms ducts along roads and pavements. In 1994, the company was bought by its management in a deal backed by £2.5 million in financing from Granville Holdings. The diversification programme of Sketchley, which also has a textiles services company, has not been a total success. However, the company, said that it remained committed to its Sketchley/Supasnaps partnership with J Sainsbury and planned to increase the number of outlets.

Power market pledge

LORD FRASER of Carmyllie, the Energy Minister, insisted yesterday that the household market in electricity would be opened to competition on time next year, in spite of persistent fears of a delay. Dismissing concerns, often voiced within the electricity industry, he told the Trade and Industry Select Committee that the regulator would be able to extract "very substantial penalties" if any electricity company failed to implement competition.

Quadrant borrows

THE QUADRANT GROUP, a small engineering company, is getting a £450,000 loan from one of its own directors to overcome financial problems that include a £1.6 million debt owed to Carlton Communications. Jean-Marc Cangardel, non-executive director, will make the loan through Lyon Burwell, a company associated with him, for a period of three months at an annualised interest rate of 9.5 per cent and an arrangement fee of £15,000.

United News expands

UNITED NEWS & MEDIA, owner of the Express newspapers, says it has spent about £30 million to add three companies to its business services division. Its American exhibitions subsidiary bought Lemos Britto, a Brazilian trade show organiser, as well as *Technology and Learning Magazine*, a publication aimed at teachers and administrators. United's PR Newswire subsidiary acquired Southwest Newswire, based in Texas, from Westward Communications.

TR Pacific bullish

TR PACIFIC, the investment trust with £225 million invested in South-East Asia, believes that shares in the region are attractively priced, and, after three difficult years, are set to benefit from recovering profits and subdued inflation. TR Pacific's net assets rose last year by only 2.4 per cent, to 109.8p, a share, but the trust has started this year much better, with net asset value rising to 119.1p. The trust will pay an increased dividend of 0.25p (0.175p) on April 21.

Infobank millionaires

FOUR directors of Infobank, which sells online computer software, will gain a paper fortune of £2.25 million each when the company joins the Alternative Investment Market next week. Set up three years ago, the company is headed by David Fraser, former head of Microsoft UK. He will split the £9.02 million stake with Joseph Pillai, finance director; Graham Saad, technology director; and John Williams, development director. Shares, priced at 125p, begin trading on Tuesday.

Shorts missile contract

SHORTS, the Belfast aerospace manufacturer, has won a \$13 million development contract from the US Army to adapt the Starstreak missile for the Apache helicopter. An order to equip the entire US Apache fleet would be a huge boost to Shorts, which is growing its missile business in co-operation with Lockheed Martin and McDonnell Douglas, the US defence companies. The Starstreak is said to be immune to all known countermeasures and would be used in air-to-air combat.

Inn Business ahead

INN BUSINESS GROUP, the renamed pub company, said it will raise its investment spend to about £3.75 million as it seeks to consolidate after a year of rapid growth. The owner of 512 pubs expects to save about £650,000 as it completes integration of Mart Taverns and Sycamore Taverns, bought last year. Full-year profits, excluding exceptional, grew to £2.74 million, from £204,000. Overall turnover rose 96 per cent, to £15 million. A 1p maiden final dividend, due on April 4, makes 15p.

PSD value tops £50m

PSD, the recruitment services group, will be valued at £53.2 million when it joins the stock market next Thursday — some 25 per cent higher than expected. Peter Hearn, the chairman, will retain a stake worth £16.5 million. The former accountant set up the company with £200,000 six years ago. Francesca Robinson, managing director, will retain a holding worth £1.6 million. PSD is raising £29.7 million from a placing of 13.5 million shares at 220p.

Compaq picks Dublin

COMPAQ, one of the world's biggest computer companies, is to invest £17 million in a teleservices centre in Dublin. Its European Customer Care Centre will create 550 jobs within three years. When fully operational, it will handle more than 4.5 million calls a year. The Irish Republic began targeting the teleservices sector five years ago and has persuaded some key players in the computer industry to move their European support centres there; teleservices now employ 3,500.

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Business roundup
Hutchley to expand
h £29m purchase

Market pledge

drain borrows

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Pacific building

bank million

its mission

Business news

D value tops £100

mpaq picks 1997

split

New broom shaking up Unilever Better mix for US spirits Fines for Barlow Clowes auditors

CURIOUS people, the Dutch — they seem to like us. Anglo-French corporate marriages tend to end in hell, the French adept at establishing creeping control. Germans like control from the off, which is why they frown on mergers. No sooner had BMW established a joint venture with part of Rolls-Royce, the engine maker, than speculation started of an outright takeover.

By contrast, three Anglo-Dutch marriages of different vintages have traded successfully without either party seeking or gaining control. The second oldest is Unilever, which did something quite remarkable, yesterday, if it started the stock market.

Remarkable, but not unprecedented. Yesterday's rise of almost 6 per cent in Unilever's shares, as full-year profits outstripped expectations and specialty chemicals went up for sale, was matched by a similar jump in November after third-quarter figures were again better than expected. You have to be a Unilever watcher of rather longer standing to know just why this is unusual.

This used to be one of the dullest companies on the stock market. Quarterly figures popped up, always on a Friday for some perverse reason. From them could be pieced together the information that ice cream sold well in Transylvania, that

deodorants were the rage in Belize. But somehow the bigger picture remained hazy.

Niall FitzGerald started the process of change well before he became one of two chairmen in September. He is now planning to exchange steady businesses with stable margins of 14 per cent, worth as much as £15 billion — for what? Forget that politically correct guff about returning cash to shareholders. He wants the quarters of the group's business now in emerging markets to double in ten years. Some of this will come from steady investment, as with the joint venture in ice cream and detergent already established in China.

Much will come by acquisition. Established Western businesses with limited exposure to emerging countries will not be enough, so logic dictates risky purchases in these markets.

Some earnings dilution is inevitable at first. He needs to move fast, which presumably explains selling chemicals rather than raising the cash from shareholders or banks.

Unilever shares stand on 16 times this year's earnings and

yield just 3 per cent, which suggests much of Mr FitzGerald's plans are already in the share price.

One caveat. There are already fault lines opening up between him and his Dutch equivalent, Morris Tabakshat. An energetic new broom has once before tried to shake up one of these sleepy Anglo-Dutch combines. That was at Reed Elsevier. His name was Peter Davis, and, for his pains, the Dutch fired him.

The sybarites strike back

"PLEASURE revenge" might turn out to be one of the better imports from across the Atlantic. The nation that gave us compulsory jogging and the new Puritanism might be about to provide the necessary backlash.

Figures from Impact International, the specialist drinks consultant, show that consumption of distilled spirits in the US rose 0.3 per cent last year. That may not sound a lot, but it is startling after 15 years of falling sales. Premium brands, many

sumers to award themselves the odd non-politically correct treat after the years of deprivation — consumption of red meat in the US, for example, has not been as high since 1988.

Impact links this to the boom in cigar smoking, with special bars springing up. You do not smoke a fine Havana without a glass of premium Cognac or its equivalent at your elbow. One brandy even comes with one cigar per bottle.

Of the ten fastest-growing brands, three apiece are owned by Seagram, of the US, and IDV, which is owned by GrandMet. Guinness's Hennessy brandy is up there too, even if it's the fastest-growing brand, a weird vodka in a cobalt blue bottle that first took off in the Midwest, is as yet independent. The bad news is that of the four drinks that showed a fall in consumption, two are owned by, one might have guessed, Allied Domecq.

This does not represent an immediate revival of the fortunes of the drinks industry. But it does suggest that those big drinks groups such as IDV, Allied Domecq, and Seagram that have

£350,000, on partners of Spicer & Pegler, Barlow Clowes' accountants. The in-house financial controller was fined £5,000.

During the period of the inquiry, Spicer has changed its name and been subsumed into a much larger practice. Then the name changed again: the remnants can today be traced to Deloitte & Touche. Half its 200-plus partners have retired. The in-house man, Edward John Godfrey, is, like a character out of Somerset Maugham, eking out a straitened existence in Portugal. Investors have been compensated for most of their losses. The main villain, Peter Clowes, has served four years in jail and is a free man again.

The ICA says a new disciplinary procedure should be quicker. Alas, we are still waiting for positive evidence of this.

Good, Evans

CHRIS EVANS, the tycoon behind Toad — silly name, that — whose chief executive walked out on Monday, was initially reluctant to pay any compensation. Now it seems the lawyers are circling for some going-away money. Nonsense. Charles Parker quit after just 27 days, left the company in the lurch and sent the shares tumbling. Mr Evans should stay firm; he doesn't deserve a penny.

Reuters puts buyback plan on hold

By ERIC REGALY

REUTERS, the financial information and trading group, has quietly shelved plans to return more than £600 million in cash to shareholders.

Reuters is still officially searching for the "appropriate method" to pare down its £1 billion cash pile, but Rob Rowley, finance director, said yesterday that the company is devoting little energy to the project. "We're actually just standing back for the moment," he said. "We may just be a follower, rather, than a leader next time."

Tax changes last year forced Reuters to scrap plans to return £613 million to shareholders by way of a share buyback and special dividend. Peter Job, chief executive, played down speculation that the company would spend the cash on an acquisition instead. He said: "We don't want to be pressed, just because we have the money, to make acquisitions we don't really want."

His comments come as Reuters reported a 17 per cent increase in pre-tax profits, to £701 million, in the year to December 31, on turnover of

£2.9 billion, up 8 per cent. Earnings per share were 30.4p, compared with 25.2p, and the operating profit margin rose from 20.4 per cent to 22 per cent. The results were in line with City forecasts.

Mr Job said revenue growth was unlikely this year because of the company's inability to keep up with demand for its new range of financial information products, known as the 3,000 range. Of the nearly 15,000 such systems ordered so far, only 2,500 have been installed. The installation pace is not expected to improve until the second half.

The strength of sterling will also affect growth. Reuters noted that if the year-end exchange rates had been used to convert the 1996 results, overall revenue would have been reduced by £230 million and operating profit by £100 million.

The final dividend of 9p a share, to be paid on April 28, makes the full-year dividend 11.75p, up 20 per cent.

Temps, page 28
Dow Jones lead, page 29

Gulf close to bid victory

By PAUL DURMAN

GULF Canada Resources moved decisively towards victory in its £495 million battle for Clyde Petroleum, buying heavily in the market to lift its stake to 27.9 per cent.

Gulf Canada spent more than £102 million on 85.6 million shares at the 120p offer price. Among the stakes acquired by Cazenove, Gulf Canada's broker, was a block of 13.1 million shares held by CIN Management, manager of the coal industry pension funds.

Gulf Canada said: "The decision by shareholders to sell reinforces Gulf Canada's belief that its offer is full and fair and demonstrates that the market now accepts there will be no counter bidder."

The bid is due to close on Tuesday. The battle has been fought over valuation methods, with Gulf Canada claiming that Clyde should be valued according to its net assets, while the British company based its 153p a share valuation on cashflow multiples.

Domecq set for £20m profits dent

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

ALLIED DOMEQ, the drinks company, yesterday gave warning that the soaring pound would knock around £20 million off profits.

But the shares rose 12.2p, closing at 427.5p, after a relatively upbeat five-month trading statement, concluding that underlying group profits would be ahead of last year.

Sir Christopher Hogg, chairman, said that trading had been broadly in line with expectations but growth would be concentrated in the second half. Overall volumes of spirits and wines are at similar levels to last year with trading in the US stable, although market conditions remain difficult in much of Europe. The company made substantial volume gains in Brazil and Japan.

Allied said that its retail division is performing well and that pub profits will benefit from the release of the economic Carlsberg-Tetley supply agreements.

Amstrad to launch a rival to Psion

AMSTRAD is to launch a combined mobile phone and palm-top computer at the start of next year, putting it in direct competition with Psion, which had talks to take Amstrad over last year (Jason Nisbet writes).

Alan Sugar, Amstrad chairman, said the new product is being developed using technology in the group's two remaining operations, Dancall, the mobile phone business, and Viglen, which makes personal computers. Both operations

are now in profit after Dancall left the red in the last quarter.

A £6.4 million write-off from selling £50 million of electrical goods left when Amstrad sold its consumer products side to Betamax meant that the group recorded losses of £1.78 million in the half year to 31 December (£5.4 million loss previously). Losses per share eased from 4p to 2.7p. There is an unchanged dividend of 1.25p.

Temps, page 28

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Unilever surges on plan to sell chemicals arm

THE abundance of corporate news yesterday proved mainly negative, dragging down the rest of the market. This, together with the sharp overnight setback for the Dow Jones industrial average, left the FT-SE 100 index nursing a fall of 3.4 points at 3,403.3, having been 18.8 down earlier in the session.

By the close of business almost 1 billion shares had been traded.

The best performance among the top 100 companies came from Unilever, which surged 78.1p to £14.71p on plans to dispose of its special chemicals operation. During the first nine months of the year, it made disposals totalling £200 million.

Profits last year were at the top end of expectations, up 15 per cent at £2.7 billion, with trading conditions in Europe much better than expected.

Unilever's positive performance spilled over into Reckitt & Coleman, up 18p at 727.1p and Associated British Foods, 15p better at 496p. Cadbury Schweppes was another firm market, firming 5p to 482p after completing the sale of its 51 per cent stake in Coca-Cola Schweppes Beverages for £622 million.

But things are looking grim at Reuters, with the price touching 60p, before ending the session 19.1p down at 622p.

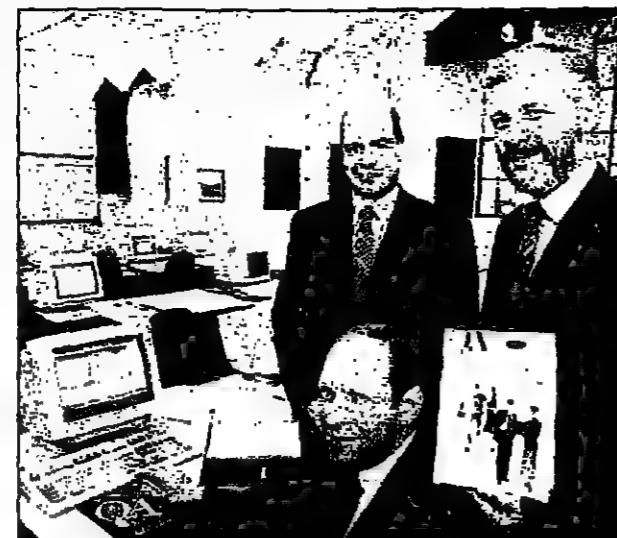
Pre-tax profits last year grew 17 per cent to £701 million, but the strong pound and a possible slowdown in growth cast a shadow.

Last year the group's share price was hit by the abortive attempt to return £63 million to shareholders. The deal was scuppered by Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who chose to levy capital gains tax on such moves in his November Budget.

Reuters warned the market that the pound's recent revival will severely restrict prospects for revenue and earnings growth.

Full-year figures from BP were at the bottom end of City expectations, leaving the price 27p lower at 664p. The strong oil price helped to boost the upstream operations of the group, but this had been widely anticipated by the market.

Clyde Petroleum was steady at 120p as Gulf Canada turned up the heat in its £494 million bid for the company. Cazenove, Gulf's broker, said:



Mike McGouin, P & P corporate development director, left, with John Atkin, right, and David Southworth, seated

ed the market, picking up 10p to 120p each. This raises Gulf's total share in Clyde to 11.97 million shares or 27.88 per cent, stretching its holding to almost 30 per cent. Cim Management has sold its entire stake of 13 million shares.

Oils generally came off, shadowing the crude price. Shell slipped 15.1p to £10.53p.

Action Computer Supplies closed unchanged at 190.1p, a shade below its peak. Henderson Crosthwaite, the broker, says the shares remain a long-term attractive investment with the prospect of years of above-average growth at minimum risk. Profits are forecast to grow from £5.2 million to £4.8 million this year.

before it figures. There were also losses for Burmah, 10p lower at £10.34p, British Oil, 4p up at £13.15, Enterprise Oil, 24p up to 648.1p, Hardy Oil & Gas, 50p to 287.5p, Lusmo, 12p to 242p, and Premier Oil, 1p up to 40.1p.

The report comes hard on the heels of a profit warning from J Sainsbury, down 4p at 316.1p, and Safeway, 8p off at 349.1p. There were also losses

at 428.1p. The food retailers were again under pressure after the latest gloomy survey from the British Retail Consortium which pointed to increased competition among food retailers.

Credit Lyonnais Laing, the broker, remains bullish about prospect for the oil sector generally in 1997. Top of its

REUTERS FURTHER DISPOSALS PLANNED

FT-SE all-share index (based)

Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb

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for Asda, 3.1p down at 112p, Kwik Save, 1.5p at 283p, and Tesco, 1p up at 331p.

Lloyds TSB slipped 1p to 492p before its full-year figures with Paragon Gordon, the broker, said to be telling clients to 'top-slice' their holdings. Brokers are looking for some impressive performances from this month's dividend reporting season.

Another profits warning from Eurotherm left the shares 10p lower at 473.1p. This time the group blames the stronger pound, which is expected to hit profits in 1997. Talk of a profit downgrade left Electrocomponents 23.1p lower at 425.1p.

Sears was another casualty, losing 2p at 83.1p after its proposed £355 million disposal of its Freemans mail order business to Littlewoods was referred to the Monopolies & Mergers Commission.

Peptide Therapeutic ran into profit-taking in the wake of Monday's sharp rise after its link-up with SmithKline Beecham to develop a portfolio of allergy treatments. The shares finished 29.1p down at 339.1p, while SmithKline Beecham hardened 10p up to 862.1p.

A new day and a new name for P&P, the computer software specialist where David Southworth is managing director and John Atkin the finance director. In future it is to be known as SkillsGroup. The name change was made to reflect its changing image. The plan emerged as the group announced a 14 per cent rise in full year pre-tax profits. The shares responded with a rise of 4p up to 181p.

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Are these two technology businesses — both of which are now profitable, and both of which are growing — worth just £45 million? What are we to make of Amstrad's possible inclusion in the consortium to make digital set-top boxes for BSkyB? The market values Pace at £400 million because of the prospects, yet does not put a penny on Amstrad's price.

Then there is the Seagate litigation, which could add another £100 million to

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday): Dow Jones 10,636.56 (+30.02) S&P Composite 787.49 (+2.03)

Tokyo: Nikkei Average Closed

Hong Kong: Hang Seng 13,454.21 (-191.33)

Amsterdam: EOE Index 698.72 (+3.68)

Sydney: ASX 2448.1 (+1.7)

Frankfurt: Dax 3187.58 (+3.22)

Singapore: Straits 2,193.05 (+6.36)

Brussels: general 1,151.00 (+0.40)

Paris: CAC-40 2,582.09 (+13.28)

Zurich: Ska Gen 931.40 (+0.70)

London: FT 30 2,039.5 (-0.4)

FT All Share 4,326.1 (-0.4)

FTSE 100 2,051.25 (+2.3)

FTSE Eurofirst 100 2,133.39 (+0.61)

FT Non Financials 2,098.52 (-2.04)

FT Fixed Interest 1,114.44 (+0.01)

FTSE 250 982.94 (+0.05)

Barex 4,972 902.97s

USX 1,642.0 (+0.095)

German Mark 2,745.8 (+0.0077)

UK £ 1,421.2 (+0.13)

ESDR 1,174.7

RPI 194.4 Dec C.5% Jan 1987/100

RPIX 154.2 Dec C.1% Jan 1987/100

RECENT ISSUES

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John Lewis 4

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Oxford Biomedica 54

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Tuna Plantations Wt 25

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Hall Eng n/p (250) 85 - 1

Morland n/p (500) 79 + 2

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Armet 174p (+10p)

Hes Frasier 151p (+8p)

Flamec 172p (+9p)

Chiroscience 378p (+18p)

ML Laboratories 244p (+12p)

Grovernor Inns 218p (+10p)

Dudley Jenkins 240p (+10p)

JUB Sports 385p (+15p)

Eri Biotech 250p (+10p)

BAT 835p (+21p)

FALLS:

Premi Rail 366p (-40p)

LASMO 242p (-29p)

Chrysalis 752p (-30p)

Br Patroleum 56p (-27p)

Fraco 378p (-14p)

Enterprise 648p (-24p)

Grovernor Inns 218p (-10p)

JUB Sports 385p (-15p)

Eri Biotech 250p (-10p)

BAT 835p (-12p)

Amstrad 214.21 - 14.30

Aster Brands 81.51

Amstrad 214.21 - 14.30

Aster Brands 81.51

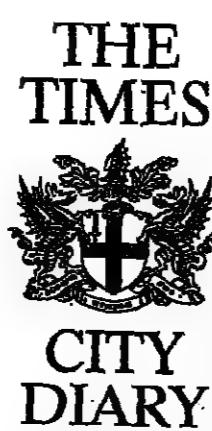
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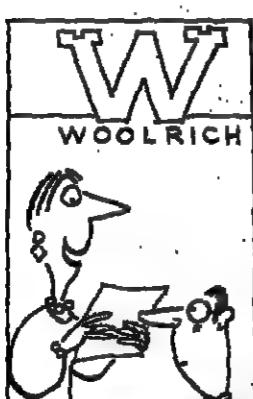
Knight of the long knives

MYRA KINGHORN, the £64,000-a-year head of the Investors Compensation Scheme had better batten down the hatches. She has incurred the wrath of Dibb Lupton Alsop, the hard-headed law firm acting *pro bono* for elderly investors who lost money through Knight Williams. If that doesn't faze her then Kinghorn should know that she has also made the redoubtable Kenneth Jordan, leader of the KW investors' action group, very angry. Jordan tells me that the ICS promised to start paying out what could be a £7 million compensation bill to investors by the end of February. Now he says: "They are completely bogged down and leading us up the garden path. Watch out Myra."

Pick of Penguin

CONGRATULATIONS to Duncan Campbell-Smith, the bespectacled author and former journalist, who was yesterday promoted to managing director, group strategy, of the Penguin Group. The father of three boys, who is currently in South Africa on business, joined the publisher's UK management as business development director last May from Pearson, the international media group that owns Penguin.

THE coal industry certainly has a sense of timing. The World Coal Institute and the Confederation of UK Coal Producers are meeting today, Ash Wednesday, to discuss cleaning up the fuel.



Murphy's law

JOHN MAJOR can look forward to an angry letter from upset savers in Dorset. The unhappy bunch claims that they unfairly missed out on bonus payments of up to £15,000 when Lloyds Bank paid £1.8 billion for the Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society last year. Brian Murphy, the building society ombudsman, argues that he investigated the complaints, and found that the society had acted according to the law. An aggrieved complainant has since rechristened Murphy the "building society's spin doctor".

Kohl comfort

A HALF a dozen bottles of wine are on their way from Helmut Kohl to David Marsh. The noble gesture follows my story from before Christmas that the director of European strategy at Robert Fleming was trying desperately to settle a bet with the German Chancellor. In December 1991, Marsh bet Kohl that EMU would not happen in 1997. The Euro-optimist was assured yesterday that six bottles of wine from the Chancellor's homeland were on their way. Cheers.

FRIENDS, family, and colleagues from Greig Middleton will gather in Norwich today for Francis Bullimore's memorial service. Sixty years a member of the Exchange, the father of the house was 83 when he died. His son, Tim, and grandson, Brett, at BZW and UBS respectively, are set to carry on the family tradition.

MORAG PRESTON

Robert Miller previews the bank reporting season and prospects for the year ahead

Plenty of bait for new shareholders

THIS time next year millions of people will tune into the bank reporting season, which this year officially begins on Friday with Lloyds TSB. They will be the new breed of shareholders created by the forthcoming stock market flotation of the Halifax, Alliance & Leicester, the Woolwich and Northern Rock.

Many may be tempted to take their profits when they receive their free shares this summer. For those who hang on, however, and the bait in takeover and merger speculation that drives up the share price, the season of annual results could provide useful indicators for the future.

Not unnaturally, from the shareholder point of view, profits and dividends will dominate the headlines over the coming weeks, but the real question should be how are the banks going to invest that money?

Credit Lyonnais is, for example, esti-

mated that the six banks reporting full-year figures in February and March will produce an 18 per cent increase in year-on-year

profits to £12.8 billion.

For Lloyds TSB it will be a maiden presentation for Peter Ellwood, the newly installed chief executive who succeeded Sir Brian Pitman, who became chairman after Sir Robin Ibbes retired. Under the leadership of the two knights, and after the aborted plan to take over Standard Chartered, Lloyds has set out a clear vision of where it wants to be—in the middle of the retail high street. To achieve this, Lloyds bought Cheltenham & Gloucester, one of the most successful purveyors of home loans, and turned it into its retail mortgage arm with branch outlets around the country. It also

pioneered the road for building societies to



Sir Brian: may expand in Latin America

took a look at National & Provincial before the society fell to Abbey National. Then, in one of the more imaginative banking coups of recent times, Lloyds swooped on TSB, before last year mopping up the remainder of Lloyds Abbey Life.

Nor has Sir Brian neglected opportunities abroad. He recently consolidated a banking partnership in Brazil and has developed a successful strategy in New Zealand. It is almost inconceivable that Sir Brian will rest on his laurels, and he could once again surprise the market with an acquisition in the next two years. He might choose to expand in Latin America, or even in Australia, where ANZ Bank could be a tempting target.

Lloyds TSB will also keep an eye on Peter Birch over at Abbey National. Since it

pioneered the road for building societies to

UK BANKS			
Report	Estimated	Actual	Estimate
Prudential Profit to Date			
Abbey National	27 Feb	1,255	1,170
Barclays	16 Feb	1,296	2,205
Lloyds TSB	14 Feb	1,141	2,485
NatWest	29 Feb	1,203	2,000
HSBC Holdings	3 Mar	2,821	4,555
Standard Chartered	25 Feb	448	570

Source: Salomon Brothers



Taylor: breathed new life into Barclays

become stock market companies in 1989, the Abbey has proved a formidable player not just in retail banking, but in spreading its success into Treasury, leasing and finance operations. Nowadays the Abbey, which is currently stalking Scottish Amicable with the aim of doubling its life and pensions business, derives 42 per cent from activities outside of the traditional savings and loans arena. While the converting building societies are distracted by their market debuts it is just possible that the Abbey will launch a raid on the newly converted Norwich Union.

The banking team at Salomon Brothers

predicts that the UK retail banking sector in 1997 should consist of all the converting societies, together with the Abbey and Lloyds TSB. Outside of that grouping another segment covering business and

international banking operations will embrace Barclays, NatWest, Royal Bank of Scotland and Bank of Scotland.

The top team at Barclays, Martin Taylor

and Andrew Buxton, who was recently

appointed as a non-executive director of the

Bank of England, have breathed new life

into the bank, which also boasts the

Barclaycard brand. Nevertheless, some

analysts believe that Barclays has concen-

trated on building up BZW, its investment

banking arm, with the appointment last

year of the highly-rated Bill Harrison and

the more recent creation of Barclays Global

Investors, the world's second-largest fund

manager, to the detriment of domestic

banking. Barclays, for its part, argues that it

is busy assessing how customers want their

services delivered in the future, such as

home computers, the Internet and over the

telephone. There is every chance, though, that messrs Taylor and Buxton, who in the recent past have bought back shares to enhance shareholder value, have an ace up their sleeves, and it could be a life or asset

purchase.

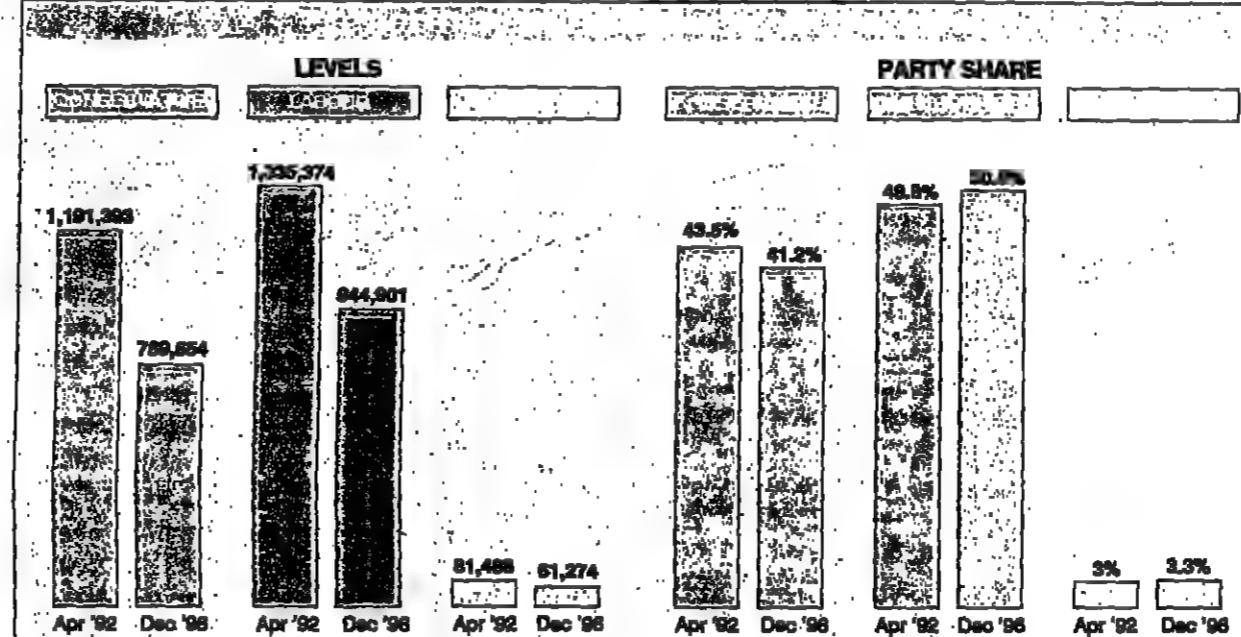
In terms of beating the opposition, however, Barclays has knocked NatWest from the number one spot over the past five years in terms of market capitalisation, with £18 billion to £14 billion respectively. Last year was a busy one for NatWest, headed by Lord Alexander of Weeton and Derek Wanless. Arguably their most inspired acquisition was that of Gartmore to bolster the asset management arm. Less obvious was the multimillion-pound purchase by NatWest Markets of JO Hambro Magan, the corporate finance boutique. True, there are obvious synergies with the US operation of Gleacher NatWest and NatWest Markets can genuinely claim to be a world class player in this sector, but this is a high-risk strategy.

On the genuinely international side of banking, only Standard Chartered and HSBC Holdings, owner of Midland Bank, can lay claim to this category. However, HSBC, headed by Sir William Purves, must be aware that there are several gaps in its UK domestic portfolio. Midland badly needs a boost and Sir William is thought to have a particular fondness for Royal Bank of Scotland.

For the forthcoming reporting season increased profits, possible further share buybacks and falling bad-debt provisions, will be the order of the day. The real fun, however, will begin next year, when bank boards will have to answer to millions more vociferous shareholders.

Why parties play the numbers game with the unemployed

Philip Bassett
overlays the political map of Britain with today's jobs data



other, though Lib Dem joblessness has shown a stability unrelated to either.

Looked at since the general election in April 1992, some significant patterns begin to emerge. Principally, they show that falling unemployment is differentially benefiting the Conservatives:

■ Change in level. Since the last election, total unemployment has fallen by almost 43,000. Unemployment in Conservative areas is down 221,000, 30,000 more than the fall in Labour-area unemployment, which is down 191,000.

Overall, Conservative unemployment is on average four-fifths the level of Labour unemployment.

■ Change of rate. The speed

of change is faster in Conserva-

tive areas and is still accelerat-

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while in Labour areas it is now about

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Small losses on the day

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

هكذا من الأصول

Jennai Cox on the London Legal Secretary of the Year award, which recognises the often silent fee-earners

Unsung heroines of the legal world

Reassuring homicidal clients, coping with dictation that sounds like a Japanese weightlifter ordering take-away, and finding documents in an office that resembles a stationery warehouse in a hurricane. It is all in a day's work for a legal secretary.

To give recognition and thanks to some of the most important but unsung heroines of the legal world, the London Legal Secretary of the Year award was established in 1994. Attracting more than 200 nominations from the capital's most grateful but often silent fee-earners, the award, run by London Law Appointments in

association with *The Times*, was toasting its third winner last week.

Gill Barnett, 30, team administrator and personal assistant to the senior corporate partner at Freshfields, beat seven finalists to take the prize in what the judges said was the stiffest competition to date.

Years ago, little more than fast and accurate typing and shorthand would have been required of secretaries working for law firms, but having been rigorously interviewed and tested twice by Sarah Singer of London Law Appointments, the finalists were then invited to London's Café Royal where, in front of an

audience of hundreds, they had to respond to three situation questions and read a speech on a work-related topic of their choice.

This very public demonstration of their poise, professionalism, confidence, communications skills and sense of humour is an illustration of the much-changed demands of legal staff. The judges were also asked to look for loyalty, organisation, administration skills and initiative.

"These women have to be highly able," Ms Singer, organiser of the competition, says. "They often work for more than one fee-earner, each of whom will have a number

FLEET photos

of cases going simultaneously. Legal secretaries have to be very good jugglers."

A defining characteristic of all finalists was their loyalty, Ms Singer says. Most had been with their employers for more than five years. As the demands on support staff have increased, good all-round legal secretaries have become more scarce. Law firms are rewarding those they value in the hope they will not be tempted to leave. Ms Singer sees fewer discontented secretaries now than three years ago and those she does see are of a very high standard.

Donna Berry, one of the judges and personnel manager at Wilde Sapte, says: "The getting and keeping of clients is all-important. Business no longer comes automatically. Law today is very competitive, so image is far more important. Legal secretaries have to be aware of the part they play in getting business. They need to be the type who will walk the extra mile."

Wilde Sapte is now far more careful with support staff recruitment, says Ms Berry. The firm looks for candidates who are a "cut above". "It is about time expectations of secretaries were high. Salaries have always been good in this field and now they really are earn-

ing their money," she says.

Winner Gill Barnett's speech about the transition with her boss at Freshfields in the Lloyd's building to manage the legal aspects of the Lloyd's rescue plan last year, made this clear.

Ms Barnett, who said receiving the award was like "winning an Oscar", described her role as the first port of call for Lloyd's people chasing Freshfields and Freshfields people chasing her boss, Barry O'Brien. "Everybody wanted an answer and everybody wanted that answer yesterday," she says.

Her boss said that while doing the most demanding and challenging job any legal secretary is ever likely to encounter Ms Barnett "worked day night and weekends with great humour and commitment".

Caroline Rogers, 28, who came second, spoke about the training programme for litigation secretaries that she had devised and implemented and which helped her firm, Warner Cranston, to win an award for training. She achieved this, according to partner Michael Jones, by taking work home and refusing overtime payments.

In third place, Tammy Wilmett, 42, PA to a partner in the property department of Clifford Chance, chose a subject touched on by all finalists: the threat to their jobs from technology.

While the demand for quality legal secretaries may outstrip supply, the computer revolution threatens any future demand for them at all. But the seven women all saw this contradiction as an opportunity to develop. "Dealing with an increased number of administrative and practical aspects means we can get to know more about the deals and the key people involved," Ms Wilmett says.

As technology has helped to reduce the traditional secretarial role, so the demands on law firms have increased. Many now increasingly rely on their support staff to deal with matters that require no specialist legal knowledge.

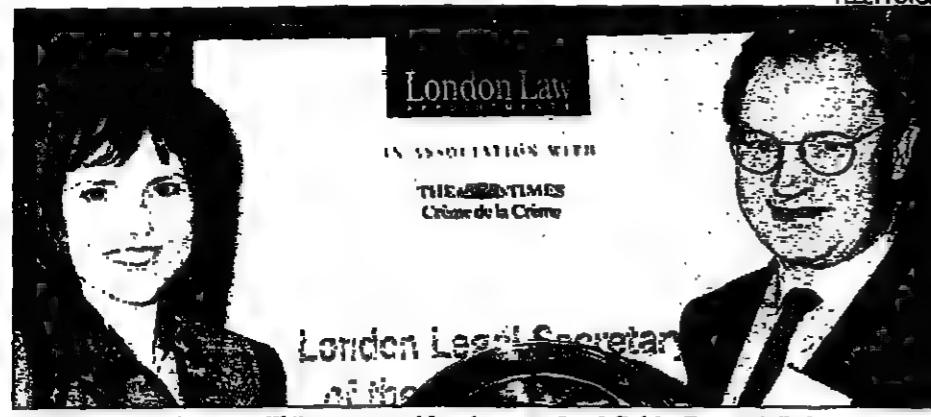
"It is only now," says Kerry Shenton, 27, another finalist who works at D J Freeman, "that they are starting to realise how valuable we are and how much they can get out of us. You are expected to take on responsibility and the bigger firms will let you."

Michael Hatchwell, a partner with Davenport Lyons and one of the competition's two

male judges, says: "Their competition was excellent. People who can present themselves well demonstrate that they are bright, quick-thinking and not phased by the unexpected. It shows a certain maturity."

The attitudes associated with the word "secretary" are dying out, Mr Hatchwell says. Even Law Society courses now include sections which make trainee solicitors aware of how to make good use of support staff. But the really clever secretaries know that some skills will never date.

As Gill Barnett's winning speech ended: "The hallmark of a good secretary is letting the boss believe he is in charge."



The winner, Gill Barnett and her boss at Freshfields, Barry O'Brien



Gill Barnett: the London Legal Secretary of the Year

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London

The Company

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Bilingual Secretary (Russian/English)

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Only senior secretaries with 5 years relevant experience and a desire to run the day-to-day clerical administration of a small office should apply. Maturity, the ability to organise temps when required, to prioritise your work, and remain cool under pressure will be essential attributes.

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Managing Director
Belinda Wilson
Threadneedle Asset Management
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London W1V 6AP

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Court of Appeal

Restricted policing decision reasonable

Regina v Chief Constable of Sussex, Ex parte International Traders' Ferry Ltd

Before Lord Justice Kennedy, Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Swinton Thomas

Judgment January 28

A chief constable's decision to provide policing on only two days a week to protect the transport of livestock to a port where animal rights protesters were demonstrating was reasonable under domestic and European law because of restrictions on resources.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment allowing an appeal by the Chief Constable of Sussex against the decision of the Queen's Bench Divisional Court (Lord Justice Balcombe and Mr Justice Popplewell) (*The Times* July 31, 1995; [1996] QB 197) allowing an application for judicial review by International Traders' Ferry Ltd of (i) a decision of the chief constable on April 10, 1995, to provide no policing when effect from April 24 to protect the transport of livestock to the port of Shoreham for shipment to France save on two consecutive days a week or four consecutive days a fortnight and (ii) a decision of April 24, 1995 refusing to change the earlier decision or delay its implementation.

Article 34 of the EC Treaty provides: "(i) Quantitative restrictions on exports, and all measures having equivalent effect, shall be prohibited between member states."

Article 36 provides that the provisions of article 34: "shall not preclude prohibitions or restrictions on... exports... justified on grounds of... public policy."

Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC and Mr Adam Lewis for the chief constable; Mr Peter Roth and Mr Rhodri Thompson for ITF.

LORD JUSTICE KENNEDY

Effect of plaintiff's delay on co-defendants

Kincardine Fisheries Ltd v Sunderland Marine Mutual Insurance Ltd and Another

Before Mr Justice Colman

Judgment January 21

Where co-defendants had suffered overlapping periods of delay which might have caused each a unique prejudice, each of them, in his application to strike out the claim, could rely on any period where, in relation to that co-defendant, the plaintiff had acted without the degree of despatch which could normally be expected in the claim being pursued.

In determining whether such delay might be found excusable in the case of a particular co-defendant, all co-defendants' relationships with the applicant were relevant as the case should be considered as a whole and where the delay affecting one co-defendant was excusable it would normally be excusable where it affected the others.

In determining whether a particular co-defendant had been prejudiced his case was to be treated separately.

Landlord's invalid notice made effective by tenant

Keepers and Governors of the Free Grammar School of John Lyon v Mayhew

Although a landlord's notice to terminate a tenancy, under section 25 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, did not have effect for failure to contain words in it informing the tenant of certain statutory rights under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 the tenant's subsequent action, amounting to a representation that the validity of the notice was not being disputed, rendered the notice effective.

The Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Leggatt, Lord Justice

Henry and Lord Justice Hildyard) held in a reserved judgment on December 2 (concerning the appeal of the tenant, William George Mayhew, against the dismissed by Judge Zucker, QC, in Central London County Court on August 25, 1995 of the tenant's counterclaim and grant to the landlords, Harrow School, a declaration that he was not entitled to have the freehold of St John's Wood Road, St John's Wood, pursuant to the 1967 Act).

LORD JUSTICE LEGGATT said that the notice was of no effect because the words omitted disregarded the express language of

regard to the undeniable fact that the manpower and fiscal resources available to the chief constable were finite.

He had concluded that (i) with the resources then available to him he could no longer both provide effective policing throughout his police area and escort lorries for ITF on five days a week and (ii) he had no realistic prospect of obtaining significant extra resources.

On the evidence available, his Lordship did not see how those conclusions could possibly be regarded as so unreasonable as to enable a court to interfere, and having arrived at those conclusions the chief constable was obliged to make a further decision, namely, how best to deploy his limited resources so as to keep the peace and enforce the law.

To describe the proposals as an abrogation of responsibility, or as a delegation of the chief constable's power to do what he was asked to do, was to ignore the fact that the resources available to him were inadequate to enable him within the principle of proportionality, to police Shoreham at a level that would enable the lorries to get through to the port on a regular basis and that he had failed to do so.

Its decision turned on the failure of the chief constable to require the police authority to make an approach to the Home Office for additional funding which it was clear had no real prospect of success.

Were the decisions unreasonable?

ITF argued that it was conducting a lawful trade which animal rights protesters acting illegally were attempting to stop. ITF accepted that the chief constable was entitled to decide how to deploy his resources, but contended that the chief constable's duty was to keep the peace and uphold the law, and that the decision constituted an abrogation of that responsibility.

In his Lordship's judgment, that approach failed to pay proper

regard to the undeniable fact that the manpower and fiscal resources available to the chief constable were finite.

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In his Lordship's judgment, turning turned on the failure to make an approach to the Home Office for financial assistance when it was abundantly clear that such an approach would not have

met with a favourable response.

The chief constable was not only entitled, but in fact obliged, to use his available resources to police as well as he could the area for which he was responsible. If that was his aim then it must be an aim countenanced by article 36, because proper policing was obviously public policy.

So the only remaining question was whether in pursuit of an accepted aim the chief constable should be regarded as having acted proportionately, and in answering that question the authorities had to grant to the chief constable, as the person charged with the responsibility of making decisions, a margin of appreciation.

The chief constable had had to

balance at least three competing rights and interests: namely, (i) ITF's right to protection for its lawful economic activity; (ii) the right of the residents of Shoreham from animal rights protesters; and (iii) the right of animal rights protesters to protest peacefully, but not illegally.

With unlimited resources, manpower and finance, there would be no competition between the rights but the court did not require evidence in order to be satisfied that the resources were not infinite.

If a balance had to be struck it almost inevitably followed that no one right or interest could be protected absolutely.

The chief constable clearly did

strike a balance and it was European law as well as domestic law that no court would interfere with his decision unless it could be shown that he was plainly wrong.

The decisions being challenged were not made primarily to lighten the administration's burden or to reduce public expenditure. They were made to make the best use of available resources, but in any event, in the absence of those decisions, in the short on Sussex, police clearly would have exceeded

the limits of what could reasonably be required.

That led to ITF's final submission, that the chief constable should be regarded as having available to him the resources of the

area for which he was responsible.

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LITERATURE
Each morning Stephen Blanchard rises early to deliver letters. Then he goes home to write books



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MARTIN BEDFORD

A postie and a man of letters

Jason Cowley talks to rising novelist Stephen Blanchard about life on a delivery round and 'writing a bit'

Each morning Stephen Blanchard rises early — not to write but to deliver letters. He returns home from Clapham sorting office in the middle of the afternoon, spends a couple of hours with his children, then sits in front of a battered Amstrad working on his remarkable, clear-eyed novels. Money is tight and he is continually exhausted. And yet, after years of drift, working as a postman has brought him stability.

"I took the job shortly after turning 40," Blanchard says. "I realised I was wasting my time. It provides me with a routine, purpose and gives me time to write. I'm quite good at it, too."

Blanchard may be a competent postman but writing is what he does best. It is hard to think of a more subtle, original contemporary novel than *Gagarin & I*, his exceptionally well-received debut. His new book, *Wilson's Island*, is similarly unusual: set in an unnamed town of derelict buildings, junk shops and seedy amusement arcades, it tells of itinerant drifter Ralph Orr's homecoming after an unexplained absence of four years.

The narrative moves with languorous slowness. There are disturbing reverberations and menacing evasions. Not much happens. Ralph re-encounters and betrays his father, makes some money playing in fixed darts matches and fails to recognise his neglected son.

As with *Gagarin & I*, the appeal of the book lies not in its plot but in its language. Blanchard is a meticulous stylist. Meaning is com-

pressed in dense layers of description (Joseph Conrad is an influence). He chisels a guarded poetry from the wood of the ordinary. His aural sensitivity fills his novels with the "petrol-starved sobs of engines" and the "rubberised sigh of brakes".

What interests Blanchard is "describing how things really look or sound. How you render faithfully the slamming of a car door or a puddle of water as it catches the light. I love the sound of a dart as it ping against wire, or a reflection cast by a mirror."

Blanchard is aware that by writing about darts he is mining the same ground as Martin Amis, whose most memorable creation, *Keith Tippett*, was a keen darts man. "Amis didn't treat darts with enough respect," he says. "He appears to adopt a contemptuous attitude to anyone who is not part of the metropolitan intelligentsia. So he spurred me to restore the dignity of darts and those who play it."

Like Leonard, the young narrator of *Gagarin & I*, Blanchard was brought up by his mother and spinster aunt in a tall, narrow boarding house in Hull. His father left almost as soon as he was born: absent parents recur in his work. Blanchard moved to London when he was 20. He lived in squats and bedits working progressively as a labourer, carpenter and junk-shop proprietor. With his hair lank and tatty clothes, he looks like a man who is used to working outside.

Until recently, he wrote only in stolen moments: short stories, prose fragments, novels begun but

never completed. He never believed in himself or in his work: he describes himself as "someone who writes a bit" rather than as a writer. A lack of self-belief underpins his hesitant, marmured conversation. He seldom completes sentences. It is hard to believe that anyone so verbally inarticulate can produce such confident technically accomplished novels.

His partner, Sarah, whom he met at a writers' group in Clapham, recalls the first time she heard him read one of his stories: "My first impression of Steve was that he spoke so little. At the time, he was writing short poems. Then he started doing short stories and had

to read them out to the group. I was amazed when this incredibly structured flow of words came out. That's when I first became interested in him."

When the couple first met, Sarah, who had published numerous short stories, was the more successful writer. With two young children, though, she now struggles to find time to write seriously. "I suppose we are a bit like the figures on a weather-vane," Blanchard says. "When we met, I was in and she was out but now it's the other way round. Perhaps, in the end, she'll succeed and I'll disappear."

That seems unlikely, however.

For there is something mysterious

and unaccountable in Blanchard's style that makes his books hard to forget. *Gagarin & I*, for instance, spotlights young Leonard's obsession with the space race. He is suffering from a rare, painless wasting disease and dreams of jetsetting his body, floating as weightlessly as his hero, Yuri Gagarin. His mother and her sister, whose conversation Leonard monitors with hilarious exactitude, are convinced he will get better. But Leonard knows he will die, having seen, in a dream or vision, his hometown as it might look in the future. The experience disorients him: "I had a feeling of looking at things after my own life

had gone by. My mouth held the powdery taste of non-existence."

Blanchard's work abounds in such moments of clairvoyance, the self teetering on the edge of dissolution, as if drugged. In *Wilson's Island*, an old man is visited by his lost wife as he struggles for breath after collapsing in a pub. Again, you are never quite sure if he is sick or if he has actually seen his wife.

Blanchard denies an interest in mysticism but admits to slipping occasionally into what he calls "blank spaces". "I remember once, on my round, disappearing into a void. When I came to my senses, I was automatically shovelling let-

ters through the door of a flat. It was frightening: I had no idea if I'd been there for two seconds or for two hours."

Blanchard is completing a third book by *The Parapin Child*, but has no plans to stop working. He may earn only £12,000 a year but writing pays substantially less: his advance for *Gagarin & I* was a scandalous £2,500; he received "not much more" for the second book.

Blanchard denies an interest in mysticism but admits to slipping occasionally into what he calls "blank spaces". "I remember once, on my round, disappearing into a void. When I came to my senses, I was automatically shovelling let-

ters through the door of a flat. It was frightening: I had no idea if I'd been there for two seconds or for two hours."

Blanchard is completing a third book by *The Parapin Child*, but has no plans to stop working. He may earn only £12,000 a year but writing pays substantially less: his advance for *Gagarin & I* was a scandalous £2,500; he received "not much more" for the second book.

For now, despite his exhaustion, he is happy being a "postman who writes a bit". Of course, he is more than that: a novelist who happens to deliver letters.

• *Wilson's Island* is published by Chatto & Windus at £9.99.

1997

House of Lords

or access order

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC: 'Authentic' Brahms in London; a Markevitch revival in Birmingham; and a reborn Irish orchestra preparing to tour Britain

No sliding place

OAE/Well

Queen Elizabeth Hall

WHILE Sir Colin Davis and the LSO steam at supertanker tempo through Brahms at the Barbican, the South Bank offers something completely different. Yes, more Brahms: but there is a distinction. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment plays period instruments: this was to be a performance aiming to "approach the texture and sonority of Brahms's familiar orchestra".

The point about preparing

Well, that illusion lasted right until the first note. The OAE lined up in impressive 19th-century formation: double basses in a row across the back, violins split left and right. But is the playing style? I don't think Brahms would have recognised it.

The point about preparing

they are far more secure in technique. So, too, with the speed question. Far from being more flexible than usual, the conductor Bruno Weil crushed too many changes in mood beneath an inexorable tread. He did whip up the fast movements, particularly the Fourth Symphony's Scherzo, where we also enjoyed the tinkle of an "authentic" triangle. But the couple first met, Sarah, who had published numerous short stories, was the more successful writer. With two young children, though, she now struggles to find time to write seriously. "I suppose we are a bit like the figures on a weather-vane," Blanchard says. "When we met, I was in and she was out but now it's the other way round. Perhaps, in the end, she'll succeed and I'll disappear."

That seems unlikely, however.

For there is something mysterious

IT WAS generous of Yakov Kreizberg and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra to devote a significant proportion of a pair of concerts they are giving in Symphony Hall to the music of Igor Markevitch — a musician remembered by few of the present-day audience, even for his conducting, which is what he did best.

A boy prodigy tutored by Nadia Boulanger and indulged by Cocteau and Diaghilev, Markevitch exhausted

Goodness gracious

Bournemouth SO/

Kreizberg

Birmingham

inspired episode — the desolate, windswept discovery of Icarus's wings after his fall — before it reverses once more to echoing *The Rite of Spring*.

In a concert with two hours still to go, however, the 25 minutes of Markevitch were a very acceptable bonus. Either of the two following items would have been enough to make the evening thoroughly worthwhile. Mitsuko Uchida joined Kreizberg and the BSO in a performance of Beethoven's First Piano Concerto

which was not only hand-

some but also professedly intense in emotional commitment. The first-movement cadenza, by far the longest of the composer's three alternatives, was a display not so much of virtuosity as of sensitivity to its extraordi-

sustain a score like that. It is even more remarkable that he was able to control its vast structure so effortlessly, powering its climaxes with every appearance of spontaneity while profiling them exactly according to the long-term economy, and retaining the freshness of the orchestral responses to the end of a long and demanding evening.

GERALD LARNER

GREAT BRITISH HOPES
Rising stars in the arts firmament

CLIO GOULD

Age: 28

Profession: Violinist. "But at the moment I'm having trouble defining what I do. It may be chamber music one week, directing my conductorless ensemble the next, guest leading a symphony orchestra, then solo work. It's a very exciting blend."

Does versatility count? "It's the new thing, we take a much more active role in the whole musical picture. Gone are the days of soloist sitting there practising, getting out their long dress, going on to play the Bruch or Mendelssohn concertos." Well, some still do, but Gould is one of the most enterprising players around.

Where can we hear her? This weekend, as principal violinist of the London Sinfonietta in the State of the Nation festival on the South Bank. Otherwise, as artistic director of the BT Scottish Ensemble, as a soloist throughout Britain and Europe, and in a series of recordings due from a new label called Voyager.

Background: A Londoner, Gould began violin lessons at three and was playing quartets at seven. She made her Festival Hall debut at 17 in a Music for Youth gala. A prodigy? "No, but when I finished school I realised I couldn't imagine not being a musician. In fact I've never wanted to play any other instrument." She went to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama then to postgraduate studies in Switzerland.

Current passion: New music. "I've been fascinated by it since college. Things are never static, they never can be. I'm really proud of what's happening in British music. There are many envious people in other countries."

Which composers has she most enjoyed working with? "John Adams is such a honey, he's so modest. After we did his *Roar Movie* piece, he came up and said, 'Thank you, I thought I'd written a dog!' John Tavener wrote *Tears of the Angels* for me and the Ensemble. It's ethereal beyond belief, and it was the first concert I ever did on the Strad."

The Strad? "It's from 1694, and I just love and respect it. I was incredibly lucky to be lent it. It's changed my playing."



Kasper de Roo with some members of the orchestra which they bring on tour.

The orchestra has two weak links.

It has the measure of his maverick crew. "On my first visit in 1988 I felt the orchestra were so lively, so energetic. They were having fun!" De Roo picked up on the volatility and exploited it positive qualities "because I, too, like to improvise — both in rehearsal and in performance. I may have a different approach, a different feeling on each new day. They recognise this, and enjoy it."

De Roo has been working cannily on the orchestra as a band of lively individuals, coxing them into closer listening, more concentrated ensemble, more exacting articulation. "I'd programme works for strings only. Then something like Stravinsky's Piano Concerto which is only for wind." And he exploited their strengths — their exuberance, their quick uptake, their love of colour — by focusing on 20th-century classics such as Ravel's *Mother Goose* Suite and Stravinsky's *Firebird*, which they bring on tour.

Conductors had always been something of a problem. No one ever wanted to stay.

HILARY FINCH

The NSOI plays Fri (8pm) in Dublin's National Concert Hall (00 353 1 671 1533); Sat (7.30pm) at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre (0131 529 6000); Mon (7.30pm) at Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall (0141 553 4134); Tues (7.30pm) at the Festival Hall (0171 460 2422).

JOHN ALLISON

جذاب من راحل

THE TIMES WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12 1997



■ VISUAL ART

Lord Alexander of Weedon unveils a new art gallery for the British public, courtesy of NatWest



■ THEATRE 1

It's a case of style over substance when Glasgow stages Wycherley's 17th-century romp *The Country Wife*

THE TIMES ARTS



■ THEATRE 2

The Royal Court's new *Backpay*, set in post-independence Soweto, doesn't rise to the mark as a stage work



■ TOMORROW

Kenneth Branagh brings his *Hamlet* to the big screen, all four hours of it. Read Geoff Brown's verdict

Today the NatWest opens its art collection to the public. The bank's chairman explains the move to Isabel Carlisle

SIR ALAN WALKER

Mammon earns some credit

The patronage of the arts by banking houses had its heyday in Renaissance Italy but has been continuing more or less unobtrusively ever since. Major corporations with headquarters in London, such as Glaxo, BP and Guinness, all have art collections on display in their buildings. The public very rarely lays eyes on them, however, which makes today's opening by NatWest of an art gallery to show its collection the more unusual.

Lord Alexander of Weedon, who has been chairman of the NatWest Group since 1989, is the motivating force behind the gallery. In the past seven years he has also steered NatWest into buying works by young, relatively unknown British artists and into founding the NatWest Art Prize. Now in its sixth year, and with a first prize of £26,000, it is for artists in this country under 35.

In talking about the gallery, Alexander is at pains to point out that credit also goes to David Edmonds, head of group services, who has been exploring ways of regenerating NatWest's City properties, and to Rosemary Harris, who was taken on as the first full-time curator of the collection in December 1995. The pair have overseen the transformation of the Neo-Classical banking hall at 41 Lothbury, which opened in 1932 as the headquarters of Westminster Bank Ltd.

The 7,000 sq ft of the hall has been emptied of the clutter of 1970s

architectural infill and taken back to its original appearance. There is a new wooden floor, but the original polished marble columns rise two storeys to support the ceiling with its glazed skylight. Sturdy screens, as solid as a wall when fixed but able to be moved to different anchor points in the floor, hold a selection of paintings from the NatWest Group's collection of mainly postwar British art.

Grouped in this show are still life, figurative, landscape and abstraction, they include John Bellany's *Three Birds of Paradise*, John Wonnacott's *Estuary: the Goat*, Albert Irvin's *San Giorgio* and Mary Fedden's *Starfish*.

This is not the cutting edge, "in your face" art of the Turner Prize, although Calum Innes, nominated

in 1995, is here with a cadmium-orange abstract. "Our art is meant to be approachable — pleasing, uplifting, thought-provoking. Some works are stimulating, some peaceful in their colours," Alexander says. The NatWest Art Prize has been seen as a rearguard action against the neo-conceptualism that has given contemporary art a bad name in more traditional circles.

"We are keen to encourage artists who have shown they have mastered both line and colour, although the final work may be abstract. There is a need for artists to have a reverence for the past."

Could the collection be seen as a counterblast to, for instance, the Saatchi collection? "We aren't competing with anyone but helping to



The healing arts on show: Lord Alexander of Weedon believes that "involvement in the arts promotes the healthy society that should be at the heart of all businesses"

offer the maximum access to art to allow people to form their own views. The important thing is accessibility," Alexander is a former trustee of the National Gallery and strongly supports the principle of free entry to museums. "We are making our collection available in the same spirit," he says. "When life is so hectic, it is good to have a painting on the wall which has other values." Entrance to the Lothbury Gallery is free.

What sort of a return does NatWest hope for on this public-spirited enterprise? The amount of money spent by the group each year on buying new art (£25,000) and funding the NatWest Art Prize (£100,000) is not insignificant. However, "we don't see the paintings as an investment," Alexander says. "We buy them because we like the work and want to encourage young artists. Painters such as Isobel Myerscough, Alison Watt and Justin Mortimer are making good now and there is a sense of

excitement for having encouraged them when they were starting out." This is a very practical form of patronage and Alexander makes the point that "everyone is having to adjust in the context of the National Lottery and its awards to the arts. We are reluctant to engage in capital building projects and keener on ongoing, participative activities." Having a community policy is also important. "Involvement in the arts promotes the healthy society that should be at the heart of all businesses," he says.

The exhibitions will change every few months, focusing perhaps on an individual artist or launching a young artist who could not afford a dealer's show. The next exhibition following *The Subjects of Art*, will be of the winners of the 1997 NatWest Art Prize, to be announced on May 13.

The Subjects of Art is at the Lothbury Gallery (0171 720 1062) until early May. The exhibition of work by the winners of the 1997 NatWest Art Prize runs from May 14 to June 11.

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THE TIMES

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Zagreb	£792	£319

CHANGING TIMES

Passion with all the lights off

Love and marriage have always been strange bedfellows. Indeed, once the honeymoon is over, separate beds have often been the order of night. The merry-go-round of serial adultery that follows is the only thing that keeps any sexual spark alive

THE COUNTRY WIFE

Citizens, Glasgow

and the whole thing becomes an elaborate game of kiss and no tell.

No play captures the thrill of the chase quite like Wycherley's 17th-century *Pinch*, which sets Horner and Pinch, a pair of clapped-out cuckolds, against each other to win the hand and other things of the reformed Pinchwife's bride, a naive but lusty lass locked away from prying eyes.

Horner masquerades as a eunuch to gain easy access to the women's pleasures without enraging the wrath of their husbands, thus satisfying his needs without besmirching his reputation. Plots are hatched and favours gained, and the ultimate prize awaits.

At the Citizens', director



Patti Clare, Henry Ian Cusick and Siobhan Stanley in a scene Wycherley would not recognise

Antony McDonald does away with period periwigs in favour of leather in a production where the *Look* is all. The initial shock of its vivid pink backdrop and angled screens soon fades, though, and seems out of date within seconds, like a big 1980s shop window.

What follows attempts to keep the energy up, but all passion is very quickly spent, and we are left with a piece that tries so hard to be sexy it's never going to score, and just winds up looking silly instead.

To be fair, by doing away

with the froth which usually swamps the play, McDonald seems to be attempting to make some serious points about who really holds sway in the sex wars. Post-feminist he undoubtedly is: he even has the female characters listed as "Ms" in the programme.

But he ends up making unnecessarily heavy weather of things, concentrating on sex as in "and violence", and leaving out the laughs. Only Henry Ian Cusick as Horner and a smouldering Siobhan Stanley come close to making

it real. Most appear to be faking it.

It is perhaps telling that McDonald is responsible for design as well as direction. Asides are spoken into twin microphones, which dangle limply either side of the stage, marrying the trappings of performance art with the visual flamboyance of opera, but taking them nowhere. Like a well-practised but empty chat-up line, this is a triumph of style over substance.

NEIL COOPER

Two for the future, if not the present

Backpay/ Cockroach Who? Ambassadors

the characterisation does not rise to the dramatic occasion. Nor does the dialogue: Hammerschlag's folk quartet, form wary bonds, quarrel some more and, with the help of a carefully contrived pregnancy, achieve a provisional and presumably emblematic understanding across the racial chasm. But only when Doma Croll's retired nanny was chortling or raging or bulldozing round the stage did I feel I was watching a full-blooded person rather than a series of nervously engineered attitudes.

Hammerschlag will write a better play, as will Jess Walter, British author of *Cockroach Who?* Her trouble is almost the opposite. Her dialogue and her characterisation leave you in little doubt that she has trekked round the stage with the nanny her mother treated so disdainfully all those years ago? How do the old lady's children feel about her?

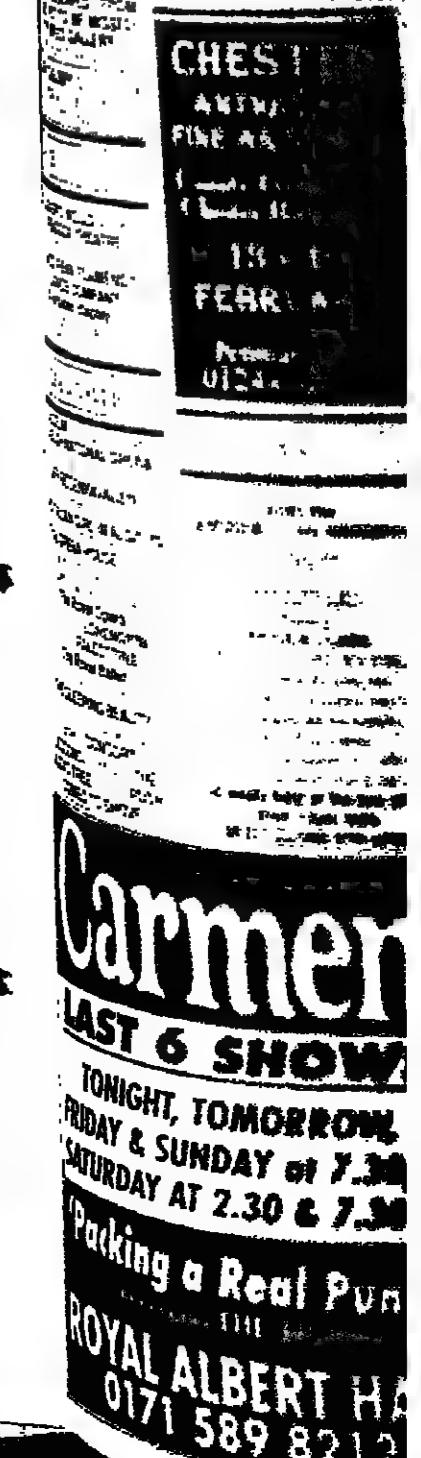
The trouble is that, with one exception,

ways and meet the old girls in the launderette.

But where's the story, what's the point? Tamika Empson's loud but incoherent Chantelle fools about with Alicea Eyo's much younger Tracey, who has romantic yearnings, a capacity for violence and bad problems with her teeth. Every now and then they encounter Nicola Stapleton's confused Natasha, who has just lost her unlovable father and, instead of joining the few mourners at his funeral, finds a dead pigeon and organises its cremation. There is a sense of drift and vague, unmotivated aggression all around.

There are also tough, old birds who swap doleful stories and cups of tea as they trudge from the laundrette to the supermarket and back again. Walters observes them with cool affection, and they are superbly played by Miriam Karlin, Stella Turner and Kate Williams. What is the author's reason for introducing them? That, too, is not so clear. But they are great company.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE





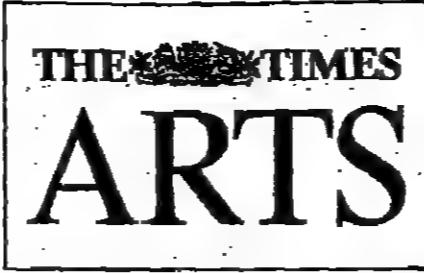
FILM

Steve Buscemi, the king of American independent actors, goes behind the camera to make his first film



CHOICE 1

Kenneth Cranham stars in Peter Gill's new *Cardiff East* for the National. VENUE: Opens tonight at the Colisseum Theatre



CHOICE 2

Cliff Richard brings his *Heathcliff* to London



CHOICE 3

The Rambert Dance Company spring tour reaches Oxford. VENUE: Tonight at the Apollo, Oxford

CINEMA: Carol Allen meets Steve Buscemi, who wrote, directed and stars in *Trees Lounge*

The weirdo goes straight

The actor Steve Buscemi is thought of by most filmmakers as the man with bulging eyes, fleshy lips and a lot of teeth who specializes in weirdos. Characters such as the whingeing Mr Fink in *Reservoir Dogs*, or the kidnapper whose face is shot off in *Fargo*, or the creepy bellhop in *Barton Fink* and the man doing tours of a hellish City of Angels in *Escape from LA*.

But there is more to this actor than just weaselly low-lifers. Buscemi was also the stressed-out director trying to get a low-budget movie made in Tom DiCillo's appealing comedy *Living in Oblivion*, and he made his mark in his very first film, *Parting Glances*, as a witty rock musician coping with HIV.

This week in *Trees Lounge*, his first film as director, which he also wrote and stars in, we get a chance to see the real Buscemi. Or rather Buscemi as he might have been if he had not, at the age of 20, left the working-class Long Island suburb of Valley Stream for the bright lights of Manhattan and a low-rent apartment in the East Village.

That was my starting point for the script," he explains. "I don't know what would really have happened if I'd stayed in Valley Stream, but based on what I was doing while I was living there, which was hanging out in bars, working in a gas station and driving an ice cream truck, I could have turned out like Tommy."

In the film, Tommy is a likeable, irresponsible loser. He has lost his job in a garage, his marriage and his pregnant girlfriend, and spends most of his time hanging out in the *Trees Lounge* bar of the title.

Unlike his fictional alter ego, Buscemi, now 38, is happily married, devoted to his performance artist wife, Jo Andres, and his five-year-old son, Lucien. And, in contrast to the wound-up, twitchy-fingered characters he so often plays, in real life he appears relaxed and thoughtful, with a friendly grin and a genuinely humorous laugh.

He is still close to his family in Valley Stream, where he shot the film. His father, a retired sanitation engineer,

who has a cameo role in the movie, was keen that his son should have a "real job", so when the young Buscemi first moved to the city he worked as a furniture remover and then in the fire service. But he also appeared in off-Broadway fringe theatre in his spare time, where he and Mark Boone Jr, who plays his best friend in the film, collected a loyal following for the plays they wrote and performed. Then in 1986, he took the plunge with *Parting Glances*, and gave up the fireman's life to be a full-time actor. Over the next few years he appeared in nearly 20 films, sometimes in tiny parts, sometimes good supporting roles. Then in 1992, came *Reservoir Dogs*, a low-budget independent movie with a first-time writer/director, in which Buscemi played the role of Quentin Tarantino had originally intended for himself.

Buscemi recalls: "Quentin was unknown but he's a very strong personality, very passionate about film and he didn't seem like a first-timer."

Reservoir Dogs was considered a crime film but there's actually very little action compared to most films of that genre. It's more like a play, with strong, complex and unpredictable characters, and that was why I was attracted to that script."

"Same thing in *Fargo*. If you put the two heavies in a more mainstream film you wouldn't learn half as much about them, they'd be just 'the kidnappers', but the Coen brothers are interested in them and they really get their relationship."

As a result of films like these Buscemi is regarded as one of the leading lights of the independent film scene. But he also has had roles in several mainstream Hollywood movies, such as *Billy Bathgate*, the forthcoming action thriller *Con Air*, about a gang of convicts hijacking a prison plane, and last year's *Escape from LA*.

"We were still working on *Trees Lounge* when I did *Escape from LA*, but I really needed to get a job, not to pay for the film but to pay my bills. I've always tried to keep a balance, making my living doing the more commercial films while the most challenging

ing and interesting parts for me have been in the independent films."

It was inevitable that Buscemi's first film as a writer and director would be a low-budget independent movie with a story that has its roots in those fondly remembered days in the East Village. "I



really missed the creative control and responsibility we had when Mark and I were creating our own work," he says. "so I wrote a screenplay with a part for myself and for him and some other actors I had worked with, like Elizabeth Bracco and Debi Mazar.

"I didn't even try getting the

money from the studios because, unless I had big-name actors in all the leading parts which I wasn't interested in doing, it's not what they would deem a commercial film. I really wanted to work with the people for whom I wrote these parts."

• *Trees Lounge* opens on Friday

Steve Buscemi has gone back to his roots for *Trees Lounge*, his first film as a director

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It was inevitable that Buscemi's first film as a writer and director would be a low-budget independent movie with a story that has its roots in those fondly remembered days in the East Village. "I

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Rachel Kelly reports on the rebirth of the urban village concept in a Scottish setting that was once a byword for poor housing

Ideal homes in the Gorbals

The Prince of Wales's beloved concept of "urban villages" was rewarded last week with the announcement that the Government is to give £50 million towards projects supported by his Urban Villages Forum. And, for the first time, the concept is being adopted by a city council.

Such villages work on the "Mars" principle: residents work, rest and play within five minutes of each other.

Edinburgh City Council is adopting the idea for the first time in hope that these villages will provide for some of the 250,000 new homes needed in Scotland over the next decade.

Mike Galloway is chairman of the Scottish branch of the Urban Villages Forum. "Such well-planned, mixed-use developments are the way forward in urban planning," he says. "They provide a genuine mix of people."

Since the Second World War, cities have been divided into rich and poor, creating an underclass." Whereas city planning has traditionally zoned areas, creating separate business, retail and residential areas, urban villages would integrate them.

Chris Aitken of Scottish Enter-

prise claims urban villages can be adopted on any site, urban or not. The aim is to regain a sense of community, Mr Aitken says, aided by the fact that everyone is encouraged to participate in planning and development at all stages.

As a result, Mr Galloway argues, urban villages help city centres to regain vibrancy and reduce crime.

Each village is self-contained, providing all the needs of its residents,

and highlighting the presence of potentially unwelcome strangers.

Although this sounds like a Utopian dream development in the Glasgow area of the Gorbals provides concrete evidence of these ideals, he says.

The Crown Street Regeneration began in the Gorbals in January 1990. Its aim was to transform the poverty-stricken district, the victim of a disastrous redevelopment in the late 1960s, eventually housing a cross-section of society in homes they could afford.

"We wanted people connected with the Gorbals community and their families to remain here, as well as new first-time buyers, so the prime concern was affordability," says Peter Brogan of Miller Partnerships, one of the main builders involved in the project.

It is the first of its kind in Britain, and Andrew Holme of the city's

Three-quarters of the planned 800 homes are to be owner-occupied and the remainder rented, but crucially, there is no discernible difference between them.

The development is almost half completed, with 30 terraced houses, 150 maisonettes and 158 flats finished.

Against many people's expectations, demand is almost outstripping supply: 300 are now occupied, with many homes bought as soon as they were put on the market. By the end of the year, a further 220 units will have been built.

Edinburgh council wishes to reproduce many of the characteristics seen in the new Gorbals scheme, which is seen as a classic model for future urban village developments. Most notably, it hopes to extend the principle of a limited use of commuting, thanks to the proximity of work and home witnessed in the Gorbals, by creating distinct car-free developments.

An experimental car-free project in the Gorgie area on the western side of Edinburgh's city centre has already received the go-ahead. Tenancy agreements for the 120 flats will include a clause stating that on-site car ownership is not allowed: 12 parking spaces will be provided, but these will be used for emergency vehicles, disabled access and deliveries.

Tenancy agreements for the 120 flats will include a clause stating that on-site car ownership is not allowed: 12 parking spaces will be provided, but these will be used for emergency vehicles, disabled access and deliveries.

It is the first of its kind in Britain, and Andrew Holme of the city's



Welcome home: Gorbals-born Jack Fisher in the spacious living room of his new Glasgow maisonette

council is an enthusiast. "Everyone accepts that there is a need to reduce traffic, but in order to achieve this, you need to accept a trade-off. In car-free areas, there is a 'greener' and safer environment with greater opportunity for social interaction."

Access to cars would not wholly be restricted, however.

"We hope to set up car clubs in which car companies, council-leased land, would hire our cars to members for long journeys and holidays."

Urban villages will be the main focus of a charter to be signed at a forthcoming conference in Edinburgh organised by the lobby

group the Urban Villages Forum. The main concern until now in all these urban village sites has been the lack of government cash.

Despite voicing its concerns for urban renewal, the Government cut the budget of Scotland's National Housing Agency, the central body for funding low-cost housing applications, by 15 per cent in 1996.

Until the announcement last week committing £50 million of government money, funding had come primarily from a partnership between the Urban Villages Forum, property developers, the council, and bodies such as Crown Street Regeneration's main funder, the Glasgow Development Agency.

The Scottish principles are likely to be adopted elsewhere. Several further urban village sites have been proposed in Scotland, including one on a former steel site in Ravenscraig, and possibilities have been mooted for Birmingham and Manchester.

The results of the Crown Street project are finally being seen, and, if such a downtrodden area can be transformed so successfully, the impetus for other areas to develop will be immense.

• The Managing Urban Growth Conference will take place on February 28 at the BICC, Edinburgh. Details from Napier University on 031 455 3347.

Community spirit returns

JACK FISHER has long had ties with the Gorbals. He was born in Cavendish Street in the old Gorbals in 1923, where he lived for more than 30 years. Last year, after 39 years away, he moved into a maisonette built as part of the Crown Street Regeneration, Robin Parker writes.

Mr Fisher remembers the Gorbals of his youth as "a working-class community where, although people didn't have much, they'd always help each other out".

After marriage, he moved away. This was a time when he felt that the community was being broken up.

"The high-rise flats were all over the place, and it was very impersonal," he says.

There was some consultation, but he does not think that the developers involved in the community enough, or had their best interests at heart. "They made lots of mistakes. They pulled down property that could easily have been refurbished," he says.

Returning more recently has proved easy. The new development, he feels, recaptures the community spirit of yesteryear.

"A nucleus of Gorbals people have remained here throughout. The people here today, you almost feel, were part of the old community."

CORRECTION

□ Bed and breakfast at the Old Rectory, near Broadway, costs from £60 per night for two people (not one person, as stated on January 29). Tel: 01386 853729.

Chris Aitken of Scottish Enter-

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ITALY

WORLD CUP FOOTBALL

Shearer leads with courage and conviction

BY DAVID MILLER

ITALY will have more technique, man for man, than England at Wembley tonight and, on paper, ought to win, yet only a rash gambler would forecast Italy's chances of victory at better than evens, never mind that they have won six of the last nine encounters between the teams.

The reasons for this seeming contradiction are to be found in the head rather than the feet. Whether it is Agincourt, Rorke's Drift, Dunkirk or the football field, the English remain level-headed in the face of adversity, masters of the tight squeeze.

The deadpan comment from the colour sergeant in *Zulu*, when a novice lieutenant plaintively asks why should they be the ones defending some isolated African outpost as the skyline darkens with advancing warriors, says it all: "Because we're here, lad, because we're here."

Much the same sort of sentiment was being bandished yesterday by the new England captain, Alan Shearer, who played every question concerning the skills of Italy with a dead bat. Dangerous attackers, Casiraghi and Zola? "We shall give them respect." A crucial cup-tie for England? "Yes, but only because it's the next one."

There is nothing remotely boastful about Shearer, no false assumptions about his qualities, yet he has an absolute certainty about what he does, and can do, that is chilling for opponents. The chemistry of his willpower, together with his shooting, however limited his technique on the ball, is an alarming prospect.

"My confidence never changes," Shearer said, expressionless, and he meant just that, even when he went ten games without scoring for England. That is why Terry Venables never doubted Shearer as the leader of his attack.

Even the many years of being obliged to take a seat

behind Brazil, Germany and Italy, and now and then others, such as Hungary, Poland, Sweden or Norway, has not diminished this self-confidence among English players and it is this that continues to make them formidable. A line stretches from Stan Cullis, captain just before the Second World War, through Billy Wright and Bobby Moore down to the likes of Tony Adams and Stuart Pearce.

The imperialist opinion, expressed in *The Times* after the victory over Italy at Highbury in 1934, lingers on: "The verdict is that England is still supreme in a game essentially



our own." Critics, I among them, may have been rude about the technical shortcomings of Adams or Pearce, but what has carried them through their international careers is this blinding sense of conviction: that any game is there to be won.

Every powerful team that plays England is conscious of this quality and seeks means to neutralise it, often by defence in numbers. The open question is that being enough — though, as Glenn Hoddle was keen to emphasise yesterday, there are players in the present England squad, such as Beckham and McManaman, who are fit to stand alongside any European or South American luminary.

The problem for Hoddle, quite apart from continuing anxieties about the fitness of

Adams and Ince, is that he knows this is a match that England must win if they are to retain confidence of qualifying from a group in which only the first is guaranteed a place in the finals. Italy will come to defend, to ensure, foremost, that they do not lose, and will regard a draw as an effective triumph.

It is all very well for Hoddle to say, as he did yesterday, that, while this is a key game, "a single point wouldn't be a disaster". A draw would unarguably give Italy a commanding position in the group and Hoddle therefore must field his strongest attacking team without leaving the door open. I believe the circumstances leave no room for Gascoigne, whose lack of pace nowadays has become too much of a handicap, whatever his inspirational qualities among his colleagues.

Assuming Adams and Ince are fit with no reaction this morning to training yesterday, my choice of a team able both to defend and attack would be a defensive trio of Neville, Adams and Southgate and a midfield quartet — Beckham, Ince, Batty, Le Saux — with McManaman free to run behind Shearer and Merson.

Ince and Batty would provide the shield for the back line, Beckham and Le Saux would provide the width, McManaman would introduce the variety that would oblige Italy to think every moment of the match.

The preference of Merson over Ferdinand could be a key factor. Ferdinand is the style of front-runner who would play into the hands of the Italian marking system. The roaming Merson, attacking from deep down both sides, would unsettle them and create more space for Shearer.

Whatever the selection, the excitement level will not be one decibel less than for the European championship semi-final against Germany last summer.

Winning post: Peruzzi makes a point to his team-mates during Italy's final training session at Wembley Stadium yesterday morning

Genial giant enjoys big reputation

Brian Glanville meets a brilliant Italian who has overcome several setbacks to inherit the mantle of the great Dino Zoff

Angelo Peruzzi will be 27 years old on Sunday. Whether this is a happy birthday will doubtless much depend on what happens this evening at Wembley, where this charming, acrobatic young man will be in the Italy goal.

Gigi Riva, a crack marksman from Italy's past, compares him with Dino Zoff, who went on keeping goal for Italy until he was over 40. "The same physical build, the same presence in goal."

But Zoff had an easier row to hoe than Peruzzi, who was struck down by a mysterious disease at 14, suspended for a year in October 1990 for taking something called Lipopil, an alleged stimulant that Peruzzi insisted he had taken simply to counteract his mother's cooking and to keep his weight down. Suspended with him was his AS Roma team-mate, Andrea Carnevale. There are those who whisper still that an innocent Peruzzi was led astray.

Be that as it may, he found it impossible to forgive Roma, who he felt, did not stand by him. There was, however, one shining exception — Roberto Negroli, the goalkeeping coach. He was the one man whom Peruzzi and his family, during that year out, would allow into their house. Peruzzi acknowledges that Negroli was one of the most important figures in his career. "He was like a father."

The disease, which completely, if briefly, disabled him, puzzled a whole retinue of doctors. "A virus," Peruzzi said. "I had it for three months. I was out for six months and away it went."

Even his debut for Roma was made in dramatic circumstances. He was on the substitutes' bench in December 1987 at the San Siro, a mere 17-year-old, when the Roma goalkeeper, Franco Tancredi, was hit by a firework and carried off. Peruzzi came on and played like a veteran, was beaten only once, from a penalty, and the game against AC Milan was subsequently

awarded to Roma. In 1989-90, the club sent him to Verona and took him back the following season, only for the suspension to fall on him. When it was over, he joined Juventus, the club for which he saved two penalties in the European Cup final penalty shoot-out in Rome at the Olympic Stadium, where once he regularly played, last May.

"I had just that one save in 90 minutes," Peruzzi said. "I thank their manager for what he said."

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Even his debut for Juventus was when he most wanted to be. "For me," he has said, "Juve has always been like Ferrari. The best, a point of reference, even in their rare defeats. I've never been a Roma fan, even though I was there for eight years."

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"I had just that one save in 90 minutes," Peruzzi

FOOTBALL

Versatile Scimeca proves central to England's plans

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

RICCARDO SCIMECA has played almost everywhere for Aston Villa. He was the leading scorer for the reserve side during the 1994-95 season with 17 goals, often from midfield, and has also operated at full back and centre forward. He has played in Villa's past six first-team matches, usually in central defence, and it is from there that he will lead England against Italy in their European Under-21 qualifying group two meeting at Ashton Gate tonight.

Though versatility can be a disadvantage—the "jack of all trades, master of none" syndrome—Scimeca is willing to bide his time. He has good tutors in Brian Little, the Villa manager, Peter Taylor, the national under-21 coach, and Gareth Southgate, the England and Villa centre back, and exerts patience as a primary virtue.

"It would be nice to settle into one position, but I've got so much to learn that, at the moment, it can do me only good to play wherever I'm needed," he said. "It's nice to be in the Villa side, it's a great opportunity to show what I can do and I'm enjoying it."

Taylor is already convinced that Little has unearthed a

diamond that has most of its rough edges already smoothed. "Riccardo is a solid player, Brian has got himself a gem," Taylor said. "I see him as a young gentleman and, because of his excellent attitude, there is every possibility that he will keep on improving."

Since Taylor was appointed by Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, he has encouraged a relaxed atmosphere during the under-21 get-togethers. "The lads know now me, how I work and what is expected," Taylor said. "They are not

locked away, unable to enjoy themselves, because I know it can sometimes be hard to be away. They have enough recreation time and all I ask is that they show respect for their jobs."

Scimeca, 21, wins his fifth cap—the first as captain—yet could have been wearing the armband for Italy this evening. Though he was born in Leamington Spa, his father, Benedetto, a Birmingham restaurateur, is originally from Palermo, Sicily.

As Scimeca Jr has moved

backwards, positionally, in order to move forwards professionally, his once prolific marksmanship has waned.

He has failed to register a senior goal, for England or Villa, yet he has the best of incentives to revive his attacking instincts tonight, apart from helping to protect or perhaps increase England's one-point lead over Italy at the top of the qualifying table. If he scores, his father has promised to give up smoking ... after 38 years.

Among those whom Scimeca will lead tonight are two players who will be making their debuts at under-21 level. Stephen Hughes of Arsenal, and Paul Murray, of Queens Park Rangers, will play in midfield.

Hughes gets his chance

after breaking into the first team at Highbury last month.

Having progressed from the junior ranks and responded to demands for a higher workload, he has started in four of Arsenal's past five games and scored his first senior goal in the FA Cup replay victory over Sunderland at Roker Park.

Murray was signed from Carlisle United for £300,000 last summer, and has made 25 appearances for the club.

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and

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Park

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will

play

in

midfield.

Arsenal seek help for Highbury extension

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

ARSENAL are planning to extend their Highbury stadium with the co-operation of Islington Borough Council. Peter Hill-Wood, the club chairman, said: "Our support is magnificient and demand is far exceeding our present capacity of 35,000. We have requested that the council look at all the possibilities for our expansion."

Officials are to carry out a feasibility study and produce a planning brief. This will cover the size of new stands, site layout, access and servicing arrangements, as well as security and the impact of proposals on the surrounding area.

Alan Clinton, leader of the north London council, said: "It's early days and all we are doing at this stage is exploring possibilities. We are delighted that Arsenal have brought the council in on the ground floor."

The club and the council are both in total agreement that the review should be conducted as openly as possible. There will be full consultation with all interested

parties at the appropriate stages."

The effect on neighbouring houses will obviously be a key issue and the Gillespie Neighbourhood Forum met recently to discuss how residents should be involved and the issues which the study should cover.

Arsenal have dismissed as speculation reports emanating from Italy that they have made a £7 million offer for Giuseppe Signori, the Lazio forward. Sergio Cragnotti, the Lazio president, is reported to have discussed the offer with Oscar Damiani, Signori's agent, on Monday, but was thought likely to refuse it.

A report in *Corriere dello Sport* said that Cragnotti was unlikely to sell Signori, the club captain, at any price as he was planning to rebuild the team around him next season.

Cragnotti nearly sold him to Parma two seasons ago, only to pull out of the deal at the last minute after strong protests from Lazio supporters. An Arsenal spokesman yesterday said that the reports were pure speculation.

Hughes gets his chance after breaking into the first team at Highbury last month. Having progressed from the junior ranks and responded to demands for a higher workload, he has started in four of Arsenal's past five games and scored his first senior goal in the FA Cup replay victory over Sunderland at Roker Park.

Murray was signed from Carlisle United for £300,000 last summer, and has made 25 appearances for the club.

Stephen Hughes of Arsenal, and Paul Murray, of Queens Park Rangers, will play in midfield.

Ispolte Kostner, of Italy, makes bold headway towards retaining her super giant slalom title at the world skiing championships at Sestriere yesterday. Kostner, 21, overcame a poor start to record 1m 23.50sec on the Kandahar-Banchetta piste and beat Katja Seizinger, of Germany, by 0.08sec.

Seizinger, the Olympic downhill gold medal-winner and former super giant

slalom world champion, was in turn 0.06sec ahead of Hilde Gerg, also from Germany. It was the Italian's third gold medal in three women's races and moved them to the top of the medals' table.

"I was never troubled by all of the attention," Kostner said, shrugging off the huge expectation in Italy after Deborah Compagnoni won the first two women's races.

BOWLS

Morgan poses final problem

By DAVID RHYS JONES

BETTY MORGAN, who did not take up the winter game until the Radnorshire Indoor Bowls Club was formed in her home town of Llandrindod Wells five years ago, is making up for lost time and, in the process, creating problems for the organisers of the Welsh women's indoor championships.

Morgan has reached the national finals in pairs, triples and fours and is scheduled to play all three tomorrow. Her hopes of making an unprecedented clean sweep vanished last month, when she was beaten 21-13 in the semi-finals of the singles championship by Ann Summer, of Torfaen.

Her involvement in three

events will disrupt the Welsh finals day at Bridgend tomorrow. She will play in the pairs final in the morning and the fours after lunch, with the triples final delayed until Friday morning.

National champions automatically qualify for the British Isles championships, which will be held in Perth next month. Morgan is delighted to have three chances of winning a Welsh title, but there are concerns that the competition rules will not allow her to compete in more than one British event.

"It's too early to comment, because I might crash out of all three Welsh finals," Morgan said. "But it does seem

crazy that someone who wins more than one national title is allowed to compete in only one British championship."

The reason is one of space: the semi-finals and finals of all four British championships, which are regarded as curtain raisers for the international series, are crammed into one day. However, the British Isles committee is understood to be considering making changes.

Leighbridge, who reached the final of the national mixed inter-club championship in 1993, and Cambridge Park, the runners-up last year, have reached the Egham Trophy quarter-finals. No former winners have made the last eight.

In the BT Global Challenge, meanwhile, the racing is still very tight in the third leg, with the 14 yachts spread out over only 29 miles in terms of their distance to the finish at Sydney. Many crews are match racing their nearest competitors, three days after setting sail from Wellington in New Zealand.

The leader is still Adrian Donovan on *Health Insured II* with the overall race leader, Mike Golding on *Group 4*, only four miles behind and with about 850 miles to go to the finish. Golding earlier overhauled Mervyn Owen on *Global Teamwork*, who is now in third place, and Andy Hindley, on *Save The Children*, in fourth position.

Official view

BOXING: British officials have urged the World Boxing Council (WBC) not to authorise a heavyweight championship rematch between Lennox Lewis, of Great Britain, and Oliver McCall, of the United States.

Lewis won the title in Las Vegas when a tearful McCall stopped boxing in the fifth round. John Morris, the head of the British Boxing Board of Control, has sent a letter to José Sulaiman, the president of the WBC, urging him to ignore McCall's excuses and take "firm action", adding that any support for a rematch would damage the sport.

Surrey station

CRICKET: Surrey have signed Jonathanatty, 22, the Oxford University wicketkeeper-batsman, on a one-year contract. Sulaiman, who will provide back-up for Alec Stewart and James Knott, has played 12 first-class matches for the Oxford and has a batting average above 30.

Interest high

SNOOKER: A peak audience of 9.5 million watched the climax of the Benson and Hedges Masters between Steve Davis and Ronnie O'Sullivan on Sunday.

ATHLETICS

BOXING

CRICKET

ICE HOCKEY

SNOWBOARDING

FOOTBALL

REAL TENNIS

RUGBY UNION

SQUASH

TENNIS

SKIING

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S JET-SET GUIDE

Business ahead

value 1500s £500

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This time, the ayes have it for the Princess

Something strange happens to Diana, Princess of Wales, when a microphone is shoved under her stately nose. But then again something strange happens to nearly everybody who finds themselves in that stressful situation. Throats dry, the vocal cords contract and suddenly a rogue set of somebody else's vowels send you rocketing up the social ladder. Now, that's liveable with if your starting point is safely middle class, but when you're an earl's daughter and the mother of the future King... it's a problem. "Last month, I flew to Angola in South West Africa," began last night's *Diary of a Princess* (BBC1). Yup, definitely a problem. That, however, is as mocking as it's going to get. OK, so the princess isn't exactly a threat to the likes of Andrew Sachs and Veronika Hyts in the lucrative voice-over market. But then again I don't suppose they're much good

at bouncing gamely around in a minibus, being charming to everybody and still managing to look at least half-a-million dollars. If *Panorama* was the Princess's darkest hour, it certainly was in the eye make-up department; then this *Heart of the Matter* special saw the pendulum swinging back firmly in her favour.

It is difficult to know who will

have found watching this film most uncomfortable. The Royal Family perhaps, forced — once again — to acknowledge that the Princess is 'bitter, prettier and about a hundred-times better with people than any of them. For, if the schoolgirl narration was a tad off-putting, the spontaneous and unscripted conversations she had with aid workers and the victims of Angola's landmines were not. She bluffed, she listened, she sympathised. It was an unbeatable combination.

Certainly, it will have seen off

the politicians who un gallantly took advantage of the parliamentary lobby system to criticise her trip. In an enlightening sequence, the cameras captured the abrasive but perfectly professional question asked, on the hoof, by the BBC's royal correspondent Jennie Bond ("some politicians have described you as a loose cannon..."), the Princess's confusion at the curious follow-up ("are you aligning yourself with Labour Party policy?") and her tearful retreat back to the minibus. "What says I'm a loose cannon?" Not anybody with an election to win.

There will be some who feel

that the BBC should not have handed over half an hour of airtime for what could easily be construed as a Princess political broadcast. On this occasion, however, I side with the corporation — for grabbing a Palace-sent opportunity and argu-

ing about it afterwards. As for the criticism that the film was one-sided... well, it was. But against the combination of the Princess and the appalling pictures of the maimed, I'd imagine the queue of those wanting to argue the case for the retention of landmines was probably a long one.

Elsewhere it was a night of

farewells, au revoirs and at least one "Don't ring us, we'll ring you",

as a whole raft of series came to an end.

Most poignant, inevitably, was the last instalment of Geoff Hamilton's *Paradise Gardens* (BBC2), marking as it did the final chapter in Hamilton's broadcasting career. There have been other opportunities to say goodbye to this popular horticulturist, so this final programme had sensibly been declared a sentiment-free, as well as peace-free, zone.

There was none of that painfully

apostle stuff about "creating heaven on earth" that made some of the earlier programmes in the series a little difficult to get through. Instead, Hamilton signed off with a selection of other people's gardens including that of a woman who made up for failing eyesight by having a garden that smelt like a tart's boudoir.

Finally, he sat on his garden wall and had a bit of a chat. A garden is a very splendid thing, he

unusually concluded: "It puts a song in your heart and fills each day of your life with joy — make sure you don't miss out." And then he just ambled off. Flowers certainly, but definitely no fuss.

By contrast, nothing will convince me that we have seen the last of Benedict Allen. He and his three canals had finally made it to the end of *Namibia's Skeleton Coast* (BBC2) and he could stop squatting into the video camera and banging on about how nice it was to be on his own again. As he made a tearful farewell to his canals, things go predictably retrospective.

"Exploration," he announced, "is not about conquering nature... it's about leaving what you know at home, opening yourself up to whatever is there and letting it leave its mark on you." And there was I thinking that exploration was about getting

yourself on television. Silly me.

Finally, let us turn to comedy. The shortage of laughs that has affected this series of *Harry Enfield & Chums* (BBC1) is nothing that more aggressive direction and a little more originality could not solve. That said, Kevin's improbable coming of age last night was probably worth a new series on its own.

The shortage of laughs that has affected *Grown-Ups* (BBC2), however, is more serious, symptomatic of an ambitious series that somehow managed to fall short of every target. It was itself. It wasn't fast enough, funny enough or friendly enough... which, for a sitcom based on a group of friends in their thirties, was something of a flaw. Despite the hard work of the cast, I never warmed to any of the characters and never really understood how they might have become friends. Thank heaven they're repeating *Friends*.

6.00am Business Breakfast (44367)
7.00 BBC Breakfast News (1) (85763)
9.00 Breakfast News Extra (1) (889183)
9.20 Style Challenge (152552)
9.45 Kilroy (889136)
10.30 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (84725)
11.00 News (7) and weather (547059)
11.05 The Really Useful Show (2444638)
11.35 Change That (5355367)
12.00 News (7) and weather (9472015)
12.05pm The Alphabet Game (505183)
12.30 Going for a Song (734218)
12.35 The Weather Show (3445164)
1.00 News (7) and weather (35522)
1.30 Regional News (98380947)
1.40 Neighbours (1) (2059568)
2.05 Police Reports (2234218)
2.50 Put It to the Test (211883)
3.15 Holiday Outings Jill Dando visits Vitocco on the Island of Elba (1) (2465386)
3.30 Playdays (1789202) 8.50 The Chocolatier (1748164) 4.10 The Return of Jonny Quest (8856105) 4.35 The Wild House (5355085) 5.00 Newerwood (7) (721314) 5.10 Blue Peter (1) (1503838)
5.35 Neighbours (1) (803819)
6.00 News (7) and weather (289)
6.30 Regional News (251)
7.00 Noel's Tally Years: Noel Edmonds takes a look at 1988 with Jenny Agutter and Lance Percival (7) (2744)
7.30 Tomorrow's World: How to send postcards while stranded in the desert; an innovative way to ensure the emergency services reach their destination without any frantic hijuce, currently being tested in Devon (7) (763)
8.00 National Lottery Live Carol Smills is joined by Adam Wood from *EastEnders* and music is provided by Belinda Carlisle (512299)
8.15 25 Years of the Two Ronnies Highlights from a quarter-century of classic comedy (7) (361270)
8.30 Points of View (7) (770386)
9.00 News (7) regional news and weather (9251)
9.25 National Lottery Update (533454)
9.30 Common as Muck: The lads hatch a plan to break George out of jail, hoping he'll lead them to the all-important photo and help them to expose Stranks and Roberts's corruption. However, events take a turn for the worse and they are forced to hide out in a local church — just as Denise's mum's wedding is about to start. Last in series (7) (28112)
10.30 Sportnight: Diamond Lynx introduces highlights of England's World Cup qualifier against Italy and previews the weekend's matches in the five nations championship (7) (20386)
12.00 FILM: *Coldstream: Emerald* (1985) with Ed Harris and Max von Sydow. A double agent parachutes into France to rescue a captured American lieutenant who has inside information about the D-Day landings. Directed by Jonathan Sanger (28868)
1.30am Weather (2263329)

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For more comprehensive listings of satellite and cable channels, see the Directory, published on Saturday

SKY 1

7.00am Morning Glory (175182) 8.00 News (7) (2015) 8.25 Designing Women (1988) 8.45 The Queen (1986) 8.50 The Big Breakfast (1992) 8.55 Another World (202205) 9.10 Another World (202204) 11.00 Days of Our Lives (79807) 12.00 Open Window (1988) 12.30 The Rapist (77421) 12.45 The Shadow of the Month (1987) 12.55 Star Trek: Next Generation (2339) 1.00 Real 77-7: The Moment — with Cradden (857) 1.15 The Sopranos (1998) 1.30 The Weather (1988) 1.45 The Weather (1988) 1.50 Star Trek: Next Generation (2339) 1.55 Star Trek: The Next Generation (1987) 2.00 The Weather (1988) 2.15 The Weather (1988) 2.30 The Weather (1988) 2.45 The Weather (1988) 2.50 The Weather (1988) 2.55 The Weather (1988) 2.58 The Weather (1988) 2.59 The Weather (1988) 2.60 The Weather (1988) 2.65 The Weather (1988) 2.70 The Weather (1988) 2.75 The Weather (1988) 2.80 The Weather (1988) 2.85 The Weather (1988) 2.90 The Weather (1988) 2.95 The Weather (1988) 3.00 The Weather (1988) 3.05 The Weather (1988) 3.10 The Weather 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